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Virtual Movements: Populist Rhetoric, Technology, and Hegemony

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Virtual Movements: Populist Rhetoric, Technology, and Hegemony

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Dedication

For The People

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Virtual Movements: Populist Rhetoric, Technology, and Hegemony

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After the Financial Crisis of 2008, The Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street both claimed to be "The People" seeking representation. Each of these movements had very different narratives about the flaws in our political system, and each movement proposed conflicting solutions. In this dissertation, I offer the theory of virtual movements as a way of understanding the role media technologies play in shaping our political perceptions as groups struggle for hegemony. I analyze the narrative of the Tea Party as it is disseminated through conservative media with a broadcast structure that emphasizes fidelity to an idealized past as the solution to our current problems; For Occupy, the rejection of representation and desire to embody direct democracy without mediation relies upon a metaphysics of presence modeled on social media in which the ideal is a simulation of immediacy. Each of these movements claimed to operate without a leader, but reproduced a system of authority through their dependence on technology.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

> This is about the people. This is about the people. And it's bigger than any king or queen of a Tea Party. And it's a lot bigger than any charismatic guy with a teleprompter.
>
> – Sarah Palin to the 2010 Tea Party Convention[1]

> We demand an end to legitimized corruption / through a constitutional reversal / of the Citizens United decision. / This will help the American people. / Have a pleasant day.
>
> – Occupy Charleston to Rep. Michele Bachmann[2]

The USS Yorktown in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, was a fitting setting for a foreign policy speech. On November 10, 2011, Representative Michelle Bachmann of Minnesota, a candidate for the Republican nomination for president and founder of the Tea Party Caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives, was giving her foreign policy address in front of the ship when members of Occupy Charleston rose in unison to interrupt her speech.[3] As she said "the American consumer," a single voice yelled "mic check!" which was echoed by a handful of young people dispersed through the crowd. In this disruption, the protestors were using a technique known as "the human microphone" that was developed by Occupy Wall Street protesters when the latter were banned by

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[1]Sarah Palin, "Keynote Address at 2010 Tea Party Convention," *CNN*, Feb. 6, 2010, http://archives.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1002/06/cnr.09.html.

[2]Brandon Fish, "Michele Bachmann Gets Mic Checked by Occupy Charleston, South Carolina," *YouTube*, Nov. 10, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q9e34kHANHs.

[3]"'Occupy Wall Street' protestors interrupt Bachmann speech," *NBC News*, Nov. 10, 2011, http://firstread.nbcnews.com/_news/2011/11/10/8739200-occupy-wall-street-protesters-interrupt-bachmann-speech.
My description of the speech itself comes from the YouTube video referenced in the previous footnote, but the context is from the NBC account.

New York City noise ordinances from using megaphones. Occupy Charleston was part of a larger movement most famously known as Occupy Wall Street (hereafter "Occupy" for short) that developed in the Fall of 2011 to demand economic justice after the financial crisis of 2008. When a member is speaking, she or he says a phrase and then pauses so that the rest of the gathered protestors can repeat what is said. In this case, Occupy Charleston activists accused Bachmann of "capitaliz[ing] on dividing Americans / claiming people that disagree with you / are unpatriotic socialists / and you promote discrimination." They criticized Bachmann and, by extension, the Tea Party, for accepting funding from Americans for Prosperity, a group founded by oil billionaires David and Charles Koch. By saying that Bachmann has erroneously divided the true Americans from the false Americans, these protestors are questioning the way she has marked the territory of acceptable discourse in public life as the exclusive domain of one group at the expense of others. As the activists continued their petitioning, others in the crowd started chanting in response, "USA! USA!" After stating their grievances and demands, they were escorted out while a distressed Bachmann prepared to continue her speech. As they left, they shouted a litany of the slogan, "We are the Ninety-Nine Percent," alternating with a message for Bachmann's supporters: "And so are you."

I begin with this example of a direct confrontation between elements of the Tea Party and the Occupy movement because it illustrates the struggle over representation in contemporary politics that is the focus of this project.[4] On the one hand, we have a

[4] I use the word "Occupy" to refer to the (inter)national movement related to the Occupy Wall Street protests of Fall 2011.

prominent Republican politician giving a speech during a presidential campaign. As one of the leading advocates of the Tea Party in Congress, Bachmann worked within the system to promote their agenda, and has frequently been referred to as the ideal Tea Party movement politician promoting a smaller government, free markets, and conservative social values.[5] On the other hand, there is a group of young people involved in the larger, national Occupy movement speaking as a chorus to disrupt a photo-op for a presidential hopeful. Bachmann was an elected representative, but in this confrontation, the members of Occupy claimed that what she represented is corporate interests rather than those of average people.

Because the U.S. Constitution starts with the words "We the People," it sets up the conditions for confrontation between groups claiming to be the "true people" whose voice deserves democratic representation. Social movements, political parties, elections and other forms of politics are means through which groups express this inherent conflict in the U.S. constitutional system. Both the Tea Party and Occupy claim, for example, to be "the people" seeking political representation in the aftermath of the 2008 Financial Crisis that disrupted the global economic order.[6] Both groups have been labeled as "populist" because of their appeals to the conception of "we the people" as the source of rhetorical and political authority. Who are the "people" that each of these movements invoke when they make such claims? Because of their significance as competing forces

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5 Matthew Continetti, "Queen of the Tea Party: The presidential campaign of Michele Bachmann," *The Weekly Standard*, Jul. 4, 2011, http://www.weeklystandard.com/articles/queen-tea-party_575540.html.

6 Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, *The Financial Crisis Inquiry Report*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. United States Government Printing Office, 2011.

in the contemporary United States' political milieu, each of these movements provide fruitful case studies for analyses of the role of populist rhetoric in political representation during our time of social, political and technological evolution. The Tea Party and Occupy raised many issues that became points of contention during the 2016 presidential campaign: Bernie Sanders brought an agenda that resonated with Occupy to his impressive challenge to Hillary Clinton for the Democratic party's nomination, and Donald Trump ultimately won the presidency after a campaign in which he seemed to have become the de-factor leader of the Tea Party. The aftermath of the election has made this project especially pertinent. In the age of "fake news," how does media motivate the people to participate in politics?[7] It is my hope that this project will help us to better understand how populist rhetoric has shaped our contemporary political situation.

Throughout American history, populist rhetoric has been an important tool for both political campaigns and social movements. Over the centuries, the definition of "the people" in the United States has changed as new communication technologies have enabled dispersed citizens to participate in collective action and seek representation. As

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[7] The meaning of the term "fake news" has become contentious. During the election of 2016, mainstream media used "fake news" to refer to stories that were intentionally fabricated, which included sites that posed as mainstream outlets or sites that mimicked the form of mainstream outlets. Some of these stories were created as satire but spread as if they were true; others were created to fool readers and attract traffic that would raise ad revenue; others were created with malicious intent, such as the swarm of fake news sites allegedly created by groups working with Russian intelligence services to influence voters in other countries. After the election, partisans have deployed the term "fake news" to refer to sources or stories that conflict with their own biases, or as a way of dismissing an entire source because of inaccurate or disputed information in a specific story.
See "PolitiFact's Guide to Fake News Websites," *PunditFact*, Accessed April 23, 2017, http://www.politifact.com/punditfact/article/2017/apr/20/politifacts-guide-fake-news-websites-and-what-they/; See also "Russia, U.S. Elections, and the Fake News Cycle," *Snopes.com*, April 18, 2017, http://www.snopes.com/2017/04/18/russia-us-fake-news/.

part of the push to drive out the British in the late eighteenth century, colonial leaders met in pubs and used pamphlets and newspapers to try to formulate an identity for a new American people.[8] During the Gilded Age, what historians call the "Populist Movement" took advantage of the relatively new technologies of telegraph and telephone to grow a movement that would attempt to reign in the power of the plutocrats.[9] Across the 20th century, new technologies of mass communication (radio, television, and film) helped politicians from Huey Long to George Wallace gain popular support.[10] In this dissertation I examine how the Tea Party and Occupy use populist rhetoric to expand and/or contract the range of acceptable discourse in American politics during the Information Age. Tea Party protests were filled with Baby Boomers dressed in colonial costumes, venerating the Constitution and accusing President Barack Obama and his allies of not being "real Americans." Such rhetoric is amplified by conservative media (talk radio, Fox News) and disseminated over the Internet. Many participants in Occupy were not necessarily camping out in New York City's Zuccotti Park or other public places, but those who took selfies holding signs that told their stories of economic hardship followed by the expression "I am the 99%." How do these two very different groups justify their claims to be *the* people?

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8 Adrian Kuzminski, *Fixing the System: A History of Populism, Ancient and Modern* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 2008), pgs. 100-154.

9 Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

10 Ernest G. Bormann, "A Rhetorical Analysis of the National Radio Broadcasts of Senator Huey Pierce Long," *Speech Monographs* 24, no. 4 (1957): 244.

DEFINING THE OBJECTS OF STUDY: TEA PARTY AND OCCUPY MOVEMENT RHETORIC

In the contemporary United States, the most prominent "populist" social movements are the Tea Party and Occupy. The Tea Party movement formed in 2009 to much fanfare from the conservative media in the U.S., and has since become a potent political force as Republican politicians pander to Tea Partiers for fear of having challengers to incumbents in the primaries, a process that has become known as "being primaried."[11] Critics of the Tea Party have accused it of being a front for corporate interests such as oil titans David and Charles Koch, who fund many of the organizations that help train activists in the Tea Party network and whose libertarian philosophy helps provide the rationale for policies such as cutting environmental regulations on the refining and chemical companies that they own.[12] Members of the Tea Party deny this charge, and frequently claim to be a legitimate grassroots organization of concerned citizens united around a set of principles rather than a specific leader. These principles include free markets, individual liberty, lower taxes and a call to return to the "original intent" of the framers of the Constitution.[13] The Tea Party's success may have been most notable in state legislatures and the U.S. Congress, where members of the Tea Party caucus successfully blocked any legislation that isn't in strict accordance with their

11 An example of this is former majority leader Eric Cantor (R –VA) losing his seat in congress in a primary to a Tea Party supported challenger in 2014.

12 See, for example: Paul Street and Anthony DiMaggio, *Crashing the Tea Party: Mass Media and the Campaign to Remake American Politics* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2011).

13 One must assume that when advocates invoke the "original intent" of the "Founding Fathers," they don't mean the parts about slavery, or women not being able to vote.

ideals, contributing to the 113th congress being the least productive in U.S. history.[14] The protests have died down, for now, as activists have shifted their emphasis from agitation to legislation, but the ability of their movement tactics to have such a major influence on traditional electoral politics makes it a significant rhetorical force worthy of attention.[15] After all, Donald Trump tested many of the major themes of his campaign as early as 2011 at a Tea Party rally in Boca Raton, Florida.[16]

The Tea Party gave its adherents an answer to the exigency of the financial crisis, but the crisis also created the conditions for other populist uprisings throughout the world over the next few years. Most notably, in 2011 this populist impulse awoke protestors across the Middle East who toppled dictators in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt. The spirit of the co-called Arab Spring spread to Europe by the end of the summer of 2011, as students and workers agitated for change. By the end of the year, protestors against the social, political, and economic order of the United States were invoking this same populist zeitgeist. If the Tea Party was able to channel outrage in the aftermath of the financial crisis away from capitalism and project our guilt onto the government, Occupy Wall Street can be said to be an attempt to bring public attention back to issues of economic inequality and assign blame to corruption at the heart of a globalized capitalist system.

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14 The 113th congress was labeled by many as the least productive in history based on its ability to pass legislation. See Chris Cillizza, "The Least Productive Congress Ever," *The Washington Post*, July 17, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2013/07/17/the-least-productive-congress-ever/.

15 I would presume that the Tea Party will not hold new protests with Donald Trump as president, though it is possible that they would rally as a response to the protests against Trump's policies.

16 See "Donald Trump," *YouTube*, accessed March 30 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7JuXNPxIAw.
The relationship between Trump and the Tea Party should be an interesting one to watch, as the Freedom Caucus (rebranded Tea Party Caucus) has become a major check on his power in Congress.

Prompted by a call from Canadian magazine *Adbusters* that quickly spread through social media, Occupy arose in the fall of 2011 as citizens started encampments in major cities.[17] In these encampments, Occupy activists endeavored to embody pure democracy through assemblies that advanced a consensus-based model of self-governance to develop a list of demands mostly centered on economic issues such as student debt, regulation of the financial industry, and campaign finance reform. Critics of Occupy were befuddled by the perceived inefficiency of the local, consensus-based approach to protest and activism, and almost immediately portrayed the movement as inchoate and unproductive.[18]

With social movements dominating the headlines and changing the political order around the world, I believe that rhetorical critics are especially well-suited to theorize how these groups help to shift political discourse. The Tea Party continues to make headlines through their influence on legislative policy, and they helped to pave the way for Donald Trump's presidency. The increased emphasis on discussion (or dismissal) of inequality in popular political discourse is often credited to the Occupy movement, and many of their tactics have been taken up or improved upon by groups like Black Lives Matter, and the burgeoning movement in response to Trump variously called the Women's March, Resistance, or Indivisible. My concern is *not an evaluation* of the

17 "#OCCUPYWALLSTREET," *Adbusters.org*, last modified July 13, 2011, https://www.adbusters.org/blogs/adbusters-blog/occupywallstreet.html

18 This type of criticism was ubiquitous in coverage of the movement, but an excellent example features the late Andrew Breitbart using anecdotal evidence of violence among the protesters as well as the involvement of labor unions and community organizers to discredit the movement as a seditious organization with possible ties to Obama. See *Occupy Unmasked*, directed by Stephen K. Bannon (New York: Magnolia Pictures, 2012), Netflix Streaming.

legitimacy or success of these presumably counter-posed movements; rather, my interest concerns how these movements *use rhetoric* to motivate social and political change.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS MOTIVATING THE DISSERTATION STUDY: RHETORICALLY NEGOTIATING "THE PEOPLE"

These movements prompt me to ask several questions that drive this project. If both the Tea Party and Occupy claim to represent "the people," who are "the people" and how do citizens come to identify themselves as the true "people" and see others as enemies? How do these movements use populist rhetoric to create narratives that help shape political discourse, especially regarding the economic crisis? Finally, because these populist movements are taking place in the Information Age, how do technological developments influence their discourses? In other words, how do media (cable television, radio, social media, cell phones, etc.) help shape the answer to the question "who are the people"? Although both the Tea Party and Occupy developed as responses to the event of the economic crisis that reached a crescendo in 2008, they seem in many ways to offer incompatible alternatives to solving the perceived problems of our society and, as such, have often identified each other as an enemy in a struggle for political dominance or hegemony. What is it that makes political adversaries become enemies?

It would be easy to bifurcate the two movements along ideological lines, and it would be somewhat fair to do so: the Tea Party appeals to conservatives or libertarians while Occupy has more progressives, socialists, and a large anarchist contingent. I argue, however, that a more nuanced understanding of these movements requires a focus on the various elements that come together to motivate collective action for social change *in our*

time. What follows is an examination of how populist rhetoric expresses these different elements for audiences on the Right and Left in order to produce two very different images of "the people."

One example of these elements is the strategy of the two groups: While the Tea Party explicitly works to encourage participation in traditional electoral politics, Occupy has eschewed an emphasis on the ballot box for more activist-oriented politics that have often been criticized in the corporate media for a "lack of focus." Another difference is in the age of participants, with Tea Partiers largely drawing members from the Baby Boomer generation while Occupy seems to appeal more to Millennials.[19] Given this generational difference, it seems reasonable that the answer to the question "who are the people?" would be different as each movement appeals to people with very different life experiences. Baby Boomers grew up under the threat of nuclear annihilation during the age of television and film, and with the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the war in Vietnam, and the Nixon Watergate scandal as the defining political events of their lives. Millennials (such as myself) matured along with personal computers, the Internet and cell phones. Our political memories include president William Jefferson Clinton's impeachment for lying about his sex life, the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and the discussion

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19 The standard demographic information on the Tea Party comes from a New York Times/CBS News Poll from April 2010 that found that 75% of respondents who identified with the Tea Party are over the age of 45. "National Survey of Tea Party Supporters," *New York Times/CBS News Poll*, (New York), April 14, 2010. Surveys were also conducted at Occupy Protests and their findings are consistent with the findings of an anonymous poll of visitors to occupywallstreet.org by sociologist Hector R. Cordero-Guzman that found that 64.2% of respondents were younger than 34 years of age. Hector R. Cordero-Guzman, "Main Stream Support for a Mainstream Movement," unpublished paper available at http://occupywallst.org/media/pdf/OWS-profile1-10-18-11-sent-v2-HRCG.pdf. Last accessed August 14, 2013.

of racial inequities catalyzed by hip-hop artist Kanye West during a telethon for financial aid after the devastation of hurricane Katrina.[20]

The way that different groups identify their experiences with a collective movement will be the focus in my case studies. As my examples show, political experience in the United States is often mediated by communication technologies. These technologies shape our perception of the political while also providing a means of affiliating with others who share our perceptions. My case studies will examine how perceptions of the contemporary political discourse are expressed in different contexts by the Tea Party and Occupy. To lay out the foundations for my project, I will next address prior research on each of these movements.

LITERATURE REVIEW: TEA PARTY AND OCCUPY

> They will tell you that you are dreaming, but the true dreamers are those who think that things can go on indefinitely the way they are, just with some cosmetic changes. We are not dreamers, we are the awakening from a dream which is turning into a nightmare.
>
> -- Slavoj Žižek speaking to Occupy Wall Street[21]

On November 15, 2011, New York City police evicted the primary camp of Occupy Wall Street protestors from Zuccotti Park.[22] Subsequent attempts to assemble in the park have been unable to organize the masses or duration of the original protests, in

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20 Lisa de Moraes, "Kanye West's Torrent of Criticism, Live on NBC," *The Washington Post*, September 3, 2005, sec. Arts & Living. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/09/03/AR2005090300165.html.

21 Žižek spoke at the Occupy Wall Street protests on October 9, 2011. There are various transcripts and YouTube videos of this speech available online. The version I am referencing is from Sarah Shin, "Slavoj Žižek at Occupy Wall Street: 'We are not dreamers, we are the awakening from a dream which is turning into a nightmare," *Verso*, Oct 10, 2011. http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/736.

22 CNN Wire Staff, "New York Court Upholds Eviction of Occupy Protestors," *CNN.com*, last modified November 16, 2011, http://www.cnn.com/2011/11/15/us/new-york-occupy-eviction/index.html?hpt=hp_t1.

which dozens of citizens attempted an autonomous and spontaneous community where all were accountable to each other. Similarly, the largest public demonstrations during the height of the Tea Party movement attracted tens of thousands of participants, but a Tea Party protest today may only consist of a handful of people with little to no media coverage. Does that mean these movements no longer have impact on our public discourse? Clearly, based on how often the phrase "Tea Party" is invoked in reference to the Republicans, they have become a powerful voting bloc, but what about Occupy? While the encampments are gone, does something of the spirit of Occupy live on?

Both the Tea Party and Occupy have developed from protest movements to other forms of political and cultural undertaking facilitated by staking out virtual territories online. Enter "Occupy Wall Street" into Google and one of the top results is Occupywallstreet.net, a news site that aggregates stories and blogposts related to issues of income inequality, student debt and economic justice.[23] Likewise, one of the top sites for "Tea Party" is www.teaparty.org, which features stories on Obama's offenses such as Benghazi, Obamacare, immigration, Benghazi, and Benghazi.[24] In a largely descriptive comparison between the Tea Party and Occupy, political scientist George L. Amedee notes that the Tea Party has been successful in engaging traditional electoral politics in a move from social movement to political movement, while Occupy has shunned electoral politics in favor of a more cultural movement of trying to shift public discourse on

23 "Occupy Wall Street: Live from the Occupations of New York City," *Occupy Wall Street*, accessed March 15, 2015, http://occupywallstreet.net/.

24 Also, Benghazi. #somanyquestions See *TeaParty.org*, accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.teaparty.org/.

economic issues.[25] My dissertation is an attempt to better understand the shift from embodied protest to virtual movement, but first we must look at what other scholars have said about these movements.

In this section I review relevant literature on the Tea Party and Occupy. I begin by looking at rhetorical studies of the Tea Party, which mainly focus on the crisis of representation at work in the movement. Then, I look at selections from the literature in political communication and political science that deal with the relationship between the movement and the media. Finally, I discuss previous rhetorical studies of Occupy, which tend to emphasize theorizing the resistance to hegemony expressed in the movement. While each of these studies have provided important insights into these movements, it will become clear that further work is needed to understand how they use populist rhetoric in the context of a changing media environment.

The Tea Party

The early studies of the Tea Party looked at how these groups represented the crisis by blaming the government for the economic collapse. In a 2011 essay on the Tea Party, Brett Lunceford argues that the use of rhetoric invoking guns and the second amendment by Tea Party favorites Sarah Palin and Sharron Angle appeals to an anti-government mentality that has to be addressed in order to channel discontent toward democratic rather than violent revolution.[26] Protestors at Tea Party events held up signs

25 George L. Amedee, "Movements Left and Right: Tea Party and Occupied Wall Street in the Obama Era," *Race, Gender & Class* 20, no. 3-4 (2013), 33-39.

26 Brett Lunceford, "On the Rhetoric of Second Amendment Remedies," *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric* 1, no. 1 (2011): 31-39.

saying Taxed Enough Already (T.E.A.) and invoked the spirit of the American Revolution, a time when Americans were mad enough at their government that they started a war to get rid of it and create a new one. Amanda Davis Gatchet argues that Tea Party members enact a "revolutionary style" in both their language and aesthetics (colonial clothing, flags, even the image of the Tea Party) in order to mark themselves as the true representatives of the American Revolution and protectors of the Constitution.[27] The rallying point of the Tea Party was the 2010 midterm election, when Tea Party supported candidates helped the Republicans take back the House of Representatives as well as power in many state governments.[28]

The Tea Party has been able to channel anti-government rhetoric to gain widespread influence in elected government, even having presidential candidates who identify with the Tea Party like Michele Bachmann, Rick Santorum, Ted Cruz, and Rand Paul. Trump himself spoke at several Tea Party events, however, he (in)famously seemed more interested in the fringe theory that Obama was born in Kenya than the economic principles that motivated the Tea Party. Perhaps the political figure most identified with

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[27] Amanda Davis Gatchet, "Preserving America: The Tea Party Movement and the Cultivation of Revolutionary Conservatism," in *The Politics of Style and the Style of Politics*, ed. Barry Brummett (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), 3-16.

[28] Key figures in the conservative movement, including Karl Rove and Grover Nordquist, helped develop the strategy for gaining control over state legislatures in early 2010. See "The RSLC Redistricting Majority Project – REDMAP," Accessed April 24, 2017, http://www.redistrictingmajorityproject.com/.
For a description of how the GOP establishment built on previous projects and created REDMAP in part as a response to the development of the Tea Party the year before, see David Daley, *Ratf**ked: Why Your Vote Doesnt Count.* (New York: Liveright, 2017).
This influence in state governments would prove especially useful in 2012, when the Republicans retained their majority in congress despite the re-election of Obama and Democrats receiving the majority of votes for congress. See Ezra Klien, "House Democrats Got More Votes than House Republicans: Yet Boehner Says He Got a Mandate?" *The Washington Post*, November 9, 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2012/11/09/house-democrats-got-more-votes-than-house-republicans-yet-boehner-says-hes-got-a-mandate/.

the Tea Party is Sarah Palin, the former governor of Alaska and failed vice presidential candidate. As Stephanie Wideman observes, Sarah Palin has become representative of the Tea Party while not holding an official leadership role in any of the dozens of "non-profits" that have been created using the Tea Party brand, and Wideman's analysis of Palin's "carnivalesque" rhetoric concludes that once the Tea Party's candidates become part of the institution they fight against they will lose credibility and purpose.[29] Despite this prediction, Tea Party candidates continue to have influence over the legislative agenda at the national and state level, though many of their prominent voices continue to speak from outside the government. After resigning her job as governor of Alaska, Palin went on to become a Fox News contributor, reality TV star and frequent speaker at Tea Party events.

Palin and other Tea Party orators consistently invoked the name of the people against the government to claim that they are the "real Americans" who are not being represented in the current system. Paul Johnson explains the appeal to authenticity well in his analysis of Palin's speech to the 2010 Tea Party convention, in which she uses what Johnson calls "populist argumentative" to articulate her audience as "the people" whose "common sense" may act as an antidote to the elitist expert knowledge that has corrupted the American system.[30] Johnson's analysis aligns with my own previous work on the Tea Party, in which I argued that these appeals work through what I call Palin's "narcissistic

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[29] Stephanie Wideman, "An American Carnival: The Tea Party and Sarah Palin," *The Forensic of Pi Kappa Delta* 96 (Summer 2011): 11-20.

[30] Paul Elliott Johnson, "Sarah Palin and the Populist Deductive," *Reasoned Argument and Social Change*. Ed. Robert C. Rowland (Washington: National Communication Association, 2011): 586-592.

style," in which she is able to help her audience construct an idealized American with which to identify and validate their own legitimacy as the true heirs of representative government.[31] As a candidate for Vice President, Palin attempted to identify this true American with the presidential nominee John McCain, but over time the ubiquitous image she has invoked has been the spirit of Ronald Reagan. The mythologized president and his intellectual progeny in the Tea Party are "real Americans," whose "common sense" makes them the true heirs to the revolutionary spirit of Thomas Paine, as opposed to those interlopers whose elite knowledge is suspect and as foreign as the Redcoats whose tea taxes induced the birth of a nation.

The rhetorical construction of the opposition is another important aspect of the populist frame that has received some attention, but is worthy of further development. While many commentators have labeled the Tea Party as a racist reaction to Obama's election, Darrell Enck-Wanzer unpacks the claim that the Tea Party is racist by analyzing Tea Party imagery that constructs Obama as an ominous other to show how it functions within the discursive formation of hegemonic "racial neoliberalism" in which discussion of race is suppressed.[32] While it is probably true that there are members of the Tea Party who are motivated by disgust at the first black president, his race is erased in liberal rhetoric of colorblindness in which saying some people hate Obama because he is black is just as offensive as some people actually hating Obama because he is black. The

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31 Matthew B. Morris, "The Narcissistic Style of American Politics: The Rhetorical Appeal of Sarah Palin," in *The Politics of Style and the Style of Politics*, ed. Barry Brummett (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), 47-58.

32 Darrell Enck-Wanzer, "Barack Obama, the Tea Party, and the Threat of Race: On Racial Neoliberalism and Born Again Racism," *Communication, Culture & Critique* 4 (2011): 23-30.

contrast between the Tea Party as representatives of the people and Obama as an interloper is reinforced through conservative media.

In political communication and political science, there have been multiple studies of how media influence Tea Party perceptions of political representation. As the rhetorical studies have found, one of the main concerns for the Tea Party movement has been discerning the true representatives of America from the false. This logic of representation, I believe, can also be seen in a qualitative analysis of Tea Party alternative media by Joshua Atkinson and Suzanne Berg that finds that the dominant theme in the content of these media is "purity."[33] As images proliferate through 21st century media technology, the arrival of the first black president becomes a threat that makes him an ideal scapegoat on which to project anxieties of identification, which resonates with the common Tea Party refrain "take our country back." In my Tea Party case study, I extend the research that Atkinson and Berg did in which they found that "[w]ithin the right-leaning movements and networks, alternative media erect lines and barriers used to sort out the good political agents from the bad."[34] The use of media that are consistent with one's own ideological preferences contributes to these dividing lines.

This phenomenon of constructing borders takes place in social media as well. David. T. Morin and Mark A. Flynn did a qualitative analysis of how Tea Party members used Facebook to promote "in-group" identification during the campaign of 2010 on

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33 Joshua D. Atkinson and Suzanne Valerie Leon Berg, "Narrowmobilization and Tea Party Activism: A Study of Right-Leaning Alternative Media," *Communication Studies* 63, no. 5 (2012): 519-535.
34 Atkinson and Berg, 531.

candidate pages.[35] They found that "[a] sizeable number of comments were devoted to attacking the opposition candidate."[36] This name-calling was combined with encouragement of their favored candidates to produce an overall tone of polarization, and included President Obama as a prominent target. The authors argued that the use of Facebook comments helped contribute to an "echo chamber" in which members of the movement were reinforced in their attitudes by communicating mainly with similarly-minded individuals. In the echo chamber of Tea Party politics, some voices are louder than others.

Starting with the initial outburst from CNBC commentator Rick Santelli on the floor of the Chicago Board of Trade in which he created the brand for this movement – calling for a "new Tea Party" in response to stimulus proposals by the Obama administration – corporate media have played an important role in the development of the Tea Party."[37] David A. Weaver and Joshua M. Scacco find in their content analysis of media framing within the three major cable news networks (CNN, Fox News and MSNBC) that coverage of the Tea Party on prime time programming tended to frame their legitimacy along ideological lines so that "Fox News serves as a 'guard dog' against other media channels, particularly those on the left."[38] Where hosts on CNN and MSNBC tended to be dismissive of the Tea Party protests, and often framed them in

35 David T. Morin and Mark A Flynn, "We are the Tea Party!: The Use of Facebook as an Online Political Forum for the Construction and Maintenance of In-Group Identification during the 'GOTV' Weekend," *Communication Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (2014): 115-133.

36 Morin and Flynn, 122.

37 Erick Etheridge, "Rick Santelli: Tea Party Time," *The New York Times*, Feb 20, 2009, http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/02/20/rick-santelli-tea-party-time/?_r=0.

38 David A. Weaver and Joshua M. Scacco, "Revisiting the Protest Paradigm: The Tea Party as Filtered through Prime-Time Cable News," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 18 (2013): 61-84.

terms of "crazy," Fox News was much more supportive of the movement as expressing the true will of the people. Other scholars have argued that this support crossed the line from covering the news to making it.

During the inception of the Tea Party, Fox News hosts Sean Hannity and Glenn Beck championed the movement and perpetuated the narratives that members used as a test of fidelity. According to Jules Boykoff and Eulalie Laschever, Fox News played an important role in organizing some of the Tea Party protests they were ostensibly covering as news events and helped promote the dominant framing of the Tea Party as having an impact on elections starting in 2010.[39] Cynthia Burack and R. Glaire Snyder-Hall agree that Fox News and other conservative media contribute to validating and shaping the worldview that finds expression in the Tea Party:

> It is clear that the symbolic value of identification with the founding is useful to a movement whose appeal is predicated on returning the nation to its lost values and principles, and restoring the eroded rights of American citizens. The foundation of the Tea Party is an American exceptionalism that portrays the beliefs and ideals of the nation's founders as homogeneous and the Constitution as a document whose meaning is simultaneously transparent and accommodating to right-wing culture war beliefs and aspirations.[40]

These narratives were reinforced by Fox News personalities like Glenn Beck, whose now cancelled show functioned as a classroom for promotion of a certain view of American history and values, including exceptionalism, individualism and capitalism.

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39 Jules Boykoff and Eulalie Laschever, "The Tea Party Movement, Framing, and the US Media," *Social Movement Studies* 10, no. 4 (2011):341-366.

40 Cynthia Burack and R. Claire Snyder-Hall, "Introduction: Right Wing Populism and Media," *New Political Science* 34, no. 4 (2012): 444.

Conservative media reinforce the perception that the reason for the economic crisis was not corruption on Wall Street or a failure of capitalism, but that the government has betrayed America's true values and no longer represents the people. Matt Guardino and Dean Snyder argue that the deregulated media promoted the Tea Party as a way of defending the neoliberal policies that actually led to the economic crisis in the first place:

> If the success of the neoliberal political project hinges on maintaining the New Right coalition, then the white middle and working classes must be depicted as the agents of history, as "the people" who are called upon to defend traditional American values against the alien socialistic doctrines advanced by liberals. For the Tea Party, this type of top-down populism was constructed by positioning white middle- and working class people in the mythology of the American Revolution, where they take on the role of modern-day patriots upholding the nation's founding principles of limited government—principles that the New Right links to neoliberal economic dogma.[41]

Identifying with the patriots of the American Revolution and joining the Tea Party becomes a way that people can alleviate the anxiety they feel because of threats that Fox News and other conservative media tell them are all around, such as Obama's moving the country toward socialism, secretly supporting Islamic terrorism because he refuses to identify them as Muslims, or stealing elections through widespread non-existent voter fraud.

The division between the true patriots in the Tea Party and the threat from the other is especially evident in the movement shifting its main concern from taxes to an obsession with the Affordable Care Act (ACA), or as they call it: "Obamacare." In 2010, as debate around healthcare reform intensified, so did rhetoric from the Tea Party

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41 Matt Guardino and Dean Snyder, "The Tea Party and the Crisis of Neoliberalism: Mainstreaming New Right Populism in the Corporate News Media," *New Political Science* 43, no. 4 (2012): 531.

decrying a "government takeover" of healthcare. According to Daniel Skinner, the paradox of the Tea Party is that its solution to the crisis of neoliberalism is more neoliberalism through the further privatization of as many public services as possible.[42] Even though ACA itself is a neoliberal policy, in that it requires that everyone participate in healthcare insurance marketplaces, it is portrayed as "socialism" in order to disqualify any more progressive alternatives like a single-payer system from being acceptable in the public discourse. As Skinner argues, the media contributes to narrowing the discourse because the media cannot think outside neoliberalism:

> Tea Party ideology and the media that report on it not only cannot muster a critique of this problem, beholden as it is to a vision of markets that not only precludes critique of neoliberal capital, but appears wholly disinterested in it. In the final analysis, it is therefore unsurprising to find that Tea Party ideology produces both chimera and contradiction when gauged in terms of policy outcomes. The conclusion as regards media inability to make sense of Tea Party health care rhetoric is as uncomplicated as it is fundamental: the American media is integral to the neoliberal consensus insofar as it lacks the tools to parse ideological positions in a way that is critical of capitalism.[43]

In other words, corporate media could not critique the Tea Party's rhetoric, even Sarah Palin's famous "death panels," because they share many of the assumptions that undergird this rhetoric including the virtue of markets, private sector solutions to public problems, and freedom being defined by the availability of consumer choices.

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42 Daniel Skinner, "'Keep Your Government Hands Off My Medicare!":An Analysis of Media Effects on Tea Party Health Care Politics," *New Political Science* 34, no. 4 (2012): 605-619.
43 Skinner, 618-619.

Neoliberalism is more than just a set of policies that involve the privatization of services and resources that were formerly considered public.[44] Rather, as Wendy Brown argues, "neoliberal rationality disseminates the *model of the market* to all domains and activities – even where money is not at issue – and configures human beings exhaustively as market actors, always, only, and everywhere as *homo oeconomicus.*"[45] The previous literature on the Tea Party indicates that the failure of the market in 2008 brought with it a crisis of representation. As the rhetorical studies show, this crisis was met with various discourses summoning an identification with the American Revolution. This rhetoric put the blame for the crisis on the government, and opposition to the new president Barack Obama became the motivating factor for most Tea Party actions. As the political science studies show, this worldview is reinforced by alternative, social and corporate media to create an echo chamber in which questioning capitalism and its neoliberal rationality is unthinkable. Next, I will look at the literature analyzing a movement that made critiques of capitalism and neoliberal rationality one of its motivating factors.

Occupy

As we have seen, the research on the Tea Party has tended to examine the discursive and technological resources available to the movement, and studies of Occupy have showed a similar emphasis, if at times in a more theoretical vein. From Matthew May and Daniel Synk's materialist perspective, Occupy has been described as a

44 For a cogent analysis of the history of Neoliberalism and the role of economist Milton Friedman in providing the philosophical justification, see Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, (New York: Picador, 2008).

45 Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth* Revolution (New York: Zone Books, 2015), 31.

"movement of movements" that should turn to the work of Louis Althusser to better understand how multiple factors come together to overdetermine our current crisis.[46] Anna Feignenbaum brings Object Oriented Ontology to bear on Occupy to claim that the objects of the encampment, such as tents and tear gas, should be studied for their resistant potential: "More than a mere backdrop or accessory, the objects and infrastructures that render the protest camp unique from other modes of place-based activism are inseparable from the political communication of a camp or occupation."[47] Ericka Biddle argues that Occupy "built on techniques developed by radical art for producing new social dynamics and compositions, at the same time – in its fall 2011 incarnation – it placed an emphasis on visibility and physical presence that worked at odds with its political-aesthetic antecedents, which rejected the physical art object for multitudinal possibilities of compositional events and experiences."[48] The eviction of Occupy from the parks and town squares is beneficial, according to Biddle, because it will force Occupy to move from old techniques of resistance to more innovative artistic and cultural practices. In this section, I will review a selection of relevant essays in more detail that focus on contextualizing the Occupy movement.

Ronald Walter Greene and Kevin Douglas Kuswa look at Occupy as part of a larger movement that includes the protests in Europe and the Middle East as a response to

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46 Matthew S. May and Daniel Synk, "Contradiction and Overdetermination in Occupy Wall Street," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014), 74-84.

47 Anna Feigenbaum, "Resistant Matters: Tents, Tear Gas and the 'Other Media' of Occupy," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 11, no.1 (2014), 22.

48 Erika Biddle, "Re-Animatiting Joseph Beuys' 'Social Scuplture': Artisitic Interventions and the Occupy Movement," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014):26.

the crisis of neoliberalism.[49] They argue that these movements use regional accents to articulate a politics of place critiquing the existing regime of power: "A rhetoric of protest re-draws these maps of power by exposing their present configuration to the potential that another world (another map) is possible."[50] This re-drawing of the maps of power takes place through a "horizontal regional accent" that links various movements together in solidarity: "A horizontal regional accent stresses the movement between protest places, producing a region in protest. Communication technologies provide another means by which places of protest form; they invent regions in/of protest. Communication technology exists as a means of persuasion and a site of contestation."[51] The movement in Tunisia links to the movement in Egypt, which links to the protests in Spain, which are linked to the Occupy protests in an attempt to redraw the map of power horizontally, based on equality, rather than vertically, based on domination and exploitation.

In addition to recognizing the resistant potential of Occupy's clear rhetoric of space and place, Sarah Sharma argues that we must consider how this movement also produces "temporal insurgency."[52] In creating an encampment that became a type of community in which members spent nights together, Sharma claims, Occupy called attention to the contingencies of lived temporal experience for precarious workers, who

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49 Ronald Walter Greene and Kevin Douglas Kusa, "'From the Arab Spring to Athens, From Occupy Wall Street to Moscow': Regional Accents and the Rhetorical Cartography of Power," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (2012): 271-288.

50 Greene and Kuswa, 273.

51 Greene and Kuswa, 284.

52 Sarah Sharma, "Because the Night Belongs to Lovers: Occupying the Time of Precarity," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014): 5-14.

were often targeted during the night by the police and other authorities. It does so by disrupting the temporal rhythms through which neoliberal late capitalism regulates and controls the labor and lives of its subjects: "A temporal insurgency offers a political strategy that is based on inhabiting the world in time, to name the political struggles over the contingency of life that have been invisible for far too long."[53] Importantly, this emphasis on refiguring spatiotemporal narratives of democracy is enabled through media technology, which is where most of the essays on Occupy focus.

Most of the extant essays on Occupy in communication studies have examined how the movement uses media to create different means of resistance to neoliberal capitalism. Kevin M. DeLuca, Sean Lawson, and Ye Sun look at Occupy as an important example of how the birth of a movement is framed differently in the mass media versus social media, in part because of who controls the narrative: "Traditional mass media tend to be centralized, one-to-many in form, commercial, professional-produced, and proprietary. Social media tend to be decentralized, many-to-many, nonmarket, peer produced, nonproprietary, open-source platforms, commons based and free or inexpensive in access and distribution."[54] They point out that the mainstream media framing of the movement in the first months of its existence was largely dismissive, while pundits on both the left and the right compared Occupy to the Tea Party in order to

53 Sharma, 12.

54 Kevin M. DeLuca, Sean Lawson and Ye Sun, "Occupy Wall Street on the Public Screens of Social Media: The Many Framings of the Birth of a Protest Movement," *Communication, Culture & Critique* 5 (2012): 486-486.

advocate one while critiquing the other. This corporate consensus has been challenged by the ability of members of the movement to disseminate their own narratives about it.

DeLuca, Lawson, and Sun argue that Occupy has been able to use social media to sidestep the typical corporate media necessary for publicity in order to change the national discourse to put a focus on income inequality and the other concerns of the movement. They conclude that the homogeneity of corporate media is countered by the very nature of social media: "Possibilities of participatory media are beginning to be realized as people deploying decentered knots of social media create a kaleidoscopic collage of social worlds across a vast array of public screens."[55] In other words, because social media depend on users for content, this decentralization allows for the dissemination of diverse perspectives as activists use these media to motivate us toward a different future.

The influence of social media on Occupy makes it a medium in itself, in which various perspectives can come together and produce new discourses. Jack Bratich argues for considering Occupy as an ecology in which an assemblage of various media, discourses and resistant practices are able to converge and mutate: "As meme and meme-generator, OWS produced a series of signs (including itself) to spectators that would spread to other spectators, a mimesis and contagion among strangers enhancing enthusiasm."[56] Occupy itself became a meme, a commonly shared piece of discourse on the Internet, just as it generated various memes that changed public discourse and

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55 Deluca, Lawson and Sun, 501.

56 Jack Bratich, "Occupy All the Dispositifs: Memes, Media Ecologies, and Emergent Bodies Politic," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014), 66.

allowed members to engage a resistant subjectivity to hegemonic neoliberalism. Bratich argues that the most important function of Occupy may not have been the demands it was able to develop, but its ability to act as an incubator for people involved in various movements from anti-globalization to social justice for police brutality, so that they could come together, share strategies, and develop solidarity: "OWS was an action/operation resulting in a material convergence with extension and duration, a kind of conatus that intensified its strength. The media dispositifs were thus not just means of representing ideas to an outside or mobilizing people within, but a compositional practice that attracted liminal figures (while likely repelling others) and densified relationships."[57] While outsiders complained that Occupy seemed to have no purpose, or so the corporate media narrative went, inside the group important alliances were being formed. Of course, any group that brings together anarchists, socialists, radical deliberative democracy advocates, anti-globalists, New World Order conspiracy theorists, and environmentalists is bound to get the attention of the authorities.

Although social media allows activists to connect with other activists, it also creates what Elsie Danielle Thorburn calls a "surveillance assemblage" that can both serve hegemony and be a means of resistance.[58] On the one hand, the use of live streaming video by Occupy and similar groups allows those who are separated spatially to witness the protests, assembly meetings, and other demonstrations.: "Struggles expand outwards, aided by social media, and the discussions had and actions encouraged through

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57 Bratich, 67.

58 Elsie Danielle Thorburn, "Social Media, Subjectivity, and Surveillance: Moving on From Occupy, the Rise of Live Streaming Video," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014): 52-63.

both interpersonal connections and social media encouraged a shift in people's perception of themselves – from passive to active, from impotent to virile."[59] The use of technology helped to strengthen solidarity by inspiring other groups around the country to create their own camps based on the one in New York. On the other hand, social media and streaming video made it easier for the authorities to keep track of what was going on and surveil members of the movement: "Surveillance is taken often as a source of fear by activists and others engaged in antagonistic relationship with the State and capital: technologies used to crush dissent, identify targets, and terrify populations."[60] Thorburn compares Occupy to the Quebec strike of 2012 to show how live-streaming technologies can serve a counter-hegemonic role as well when the cameras are turned back on the police and capture repression and violence: "By providing live video coverage of the police violence, the livestream feeds further challenged the authority and legitimacy of State power – already waning for those invested in a struggle against State-proposed tuition increases – for viewers and participants alike."[61] The need to adapt to techniques of control also led to one of the most prominent features of Occupy: the human microphone.

Most of the articles in this review of Occupy literature come from a single issue of *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, two of which focus on analyzing the human microphone. Lilian Radovac traces the history of the human microphone and its necessity in a New York City in which amplification of the human voice in public places

59 Thorburn, 56.
60 Thorburn, 58.
61 Thorburn, 57.

was regulated after the proliferation of Public Address devices in the 1930s.[62] As she explains, this bug became a feature of the movement as it became a way of undermining the hierarchy of leaders that tends to accompany movements and allowed for a horizontal organization: "In its earliest communiques, OWS declared that 'we speak as one,' a statement that anticipated the use of the human mic and articulated its guiding principles in the face of police repression."[63] The process of "speaking as one" was a way of attempting direct democracy by allowing all voices to be heard, but over time it developed into a way of directly addressing the powerful with a scripted message.

The People's Mic has become a way of disrupting the speech of traditional political figures from Karl Rove to Barack Obama, as Marcos Deseriis has explained.[64] These scripted disruptions in which one speaker starts and other activists echo their message is a repetition of the process through which individual speakers in Occupy encampments amplified their voices. Part of what the commitment to letting all voices be heard means is that participants are required to repeat the message of the speaker even if they don't agree with it: "by embodying the principle of allowing all voices to be heard, occupiers undergo a certain level of de-subjectivation as they have to bracket, to a certain extent, the meaning of the words they are repeating. In doing so, occupiers are lending their own bodies to a tenet of liberalism – namely, the right to free speech and freedom of

62 Lilian Radovac, "Mic Check: Occupy Wall Street and the Space of Audition," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014): 34-41.

63 Radiovac, 35.

64 Marco Deseriis, "The People's Mic as Medium in Its Own Right: A Pharmacological Reading," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014): 42-51.

expression."[65] The risk of this non-judgmental repetition of the words of others is that as a medium, the People's Mic is a type of *pharmakon*, according to Deseriis, which can allow both beneficial and toxic rhetoric to spread. The heterogeneous quality of Occupy's rhetoric is a challenge that must be considered in any study of this movement.

Perhaps because many of these essays come from an edited collection with limited space for each contribution, they are more theoretical than grounded in extensive analysis of specific texts. This emphasis may also be due to the diffuse nature of the rhetoric of Occupy, but what is clear is that thus far scholars have focused on resistant potential of the strategies and technologies used by Occupy. These strategies have a history in prior movements that continue to evolve and adapt as conditions require. Occupy serves as a forum that brings various groups and demands together, and this potential development of solidarity is facilitated by media technology. But how does the rhetoric of Occupy help attract and consolidate this opposition to authority? The extant studies of the Tea Party and Occupy point to the potential of each movement to reinforce or resist neoliberal capitalism. To summarize this review in the terms of Raymie McKerrow's critical rhetoric, the studies of the Tea Party have tended to be "critiques of domination" while the studies of Occupy are "critiques of freedom."[66] But what is it that makes people see one movement as a legitimate expression of democracy and the other as imposters?

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65 Deseriis, 46.

66 Raymie E. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis," *Communication Monograph* 56, no. 2 (1989): 91-111.

In this project I synthesize and extend the previous literature on the Tea Party and Occupy by theorizing these groups as "tribes" who rhetorically construct virtual territories in which they contend for representation as the true people. In my case studies I analyze the narratives that unite these tribes as "virtual movements" attempting to actualize their vision of the political order. My focus is on how the media ecologies of these groups influence their perception of politics while also helping give form to the narratives that motivate them. For the Tea Party, the dominance of broadcast media shapes a narrative in which the claim to representation is justified by fidelity to an idea of the past. In Occupy, on the other hand, the interactivity of the Internet emphasizes the creative potential of the people to produce a better future. Now that I have introduced this project, I will briefly preview the chapters that follow.

In chapter two I review the extant literature on social movements, media technology, and populism to develop a theory of "virtual movements." My theorization combines a Deleuzian approach with observations from the field of media ecology about how media shape our perception of time and space, in a sense temporalizing Ernesto Laclau's spatial model of populist reason. These virtual movements work as tribes who use rhetoric to produce narratives of the past and future to motivate contemporary collective action. I finish this chapter by discussing my methods for analyzing the narratives of each movement based on previous literature on populism and a modified version of Kenneth Burke's Pentad.

Chapter three is my case study of the Tea Party as a response to the crisis of representation brought about by the economic crisis of 2008 and the election of Barack

Obama. I begin by discussing the role of conservative media as a type of priesthood who help to produce the narrative that unites the Tea Party. In the first part of this chapter I look at how the broadcast media of television and radio help to produce what Gilles Deleuze called the dogmatic image of thought in which we judge representations according to their fidelity to a foundational myth. Then, I draw on various texts from the movement to analyze the Tea Party's narrative in which their claim to be the true people is based on fidelity to their interpretation of the Constitution. My analysis has three parts. First, the Tea Party narrative responds to the economic crisis by placing blame on the government rather than capitalism. Second, the Tea Party identifies themselves as the People with Ronald Reagan as their patriotic ideal against their enemies who are embodied by Barack Obama. Finally, the Tea Party constructs a tribal territory through confrontation with the liberal media over the representations that constitute "common sense."

In chapter four I shift my focus to a case study of Occupy as an alternative response to the economic crisis. As a movement with the Internet as its dominant media, Occupy was an attempt to create a spatial territory based on a non-hierarchal structure of power. I begin by theorizing how the interactive technology of the Internet creates the expectation for creating a new reality. Next, I analyze the meme, "I am the 99%" as a response to the failure of neoliberalism to create the conditions for living the American Dream. Finally, I discuss how the organization of the movement itself undermined its claims to "authenticity" by eschewing participation in electoral politics in favor of an attempt to create a new society in isolation while imposing "consensus" as the basis of

politics. Ultimately, Occupy was undone by repression from the State in collusion with corporate authorities, but the connections members made have the potential for future cultural change.

I conclude by discussing the limitations and implications of this study for our understanding of media's influence on contemporary populist movements. I review my arguments about virtual movements using media to propose potential change in social relations which are marked by territorializing time and space. I will also discuss the implications of this argument for understanding social change, and look to the future both in terms of further research and in terms of the movements themselves. The 2016 election featured the explicit use of populist rhetoric by Bernie Sanders from the left and Donald Trump from the right. At the same time, the basis for democratic deliberation was allegedly undermined by the introduction of disinformation. Scholarship on media, politics, and rhetoric may be more important now than ever as our society tries to find ways to respond to the changes technology makes possible for the future of democracy.

Chapter 2: Theory and Method

"Philosophers have interpreted the world in various ways. The point, however, is to change it."

— Karl Marx

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For conservative media audiences, the Obama years were a time of endless political scandal. After the attack on the diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya on September 11, 2012, the GOP-controlled congress and senate had eight investigations into the attack between them, with each of these coming to similar conclusions that any wrongdoing on the part of the White House or then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's State Department was a result of human error rather than criminal negligence.[68] The justification for these investigations was ostensibly to find out if the Obama administration lied to cover up their culpability in the attacks, thereby taking advantage of the tragedy for political gain. The evidence that the American people had been misled was that Obama won the election, and the GOP raised money based on the urgency to continue these investigations.[69] The last congressional investigation led to the discovery that Clinton had used a private email server as Secretary of State, which prompted an FBI

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[67] Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in Frederick Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, ed. Sankar Srinivasan (Independently published, 2017), 93.

[68] The pattern for each investigation was to mostly ignore the prior investigations and claim that there were "so many questions" as a justification for the investigation. For the list of investigations, see: "Clinton: 7 Benghazi Probes So Far," *Politifact*, October 12, 2015, http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2015/oct/12/hillary-clinton/clinton-there-have-been-7-benghazi-probes-so-far/.

[69] "Latest Partisan Flashpoint: GOP Benghazi Fundraising," *NPR*, May 8, 2014, http://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2014/05/08/310795987/latest-partisan-flashpoint-gop-benghazi-fundraising.

investigation that concluded after finding no evidence of criminal intent.[70] Even so, the perception of Clinton's corruption was used effectively against her campaign for president in 2016. Trump surrogates such as New Jersey Governor Chris Christie and Lt. General Michael Flynn led the audience during the GOP convention in chants of "lock her up." U.S. Representative Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif) implied that affecting Clinton's election chances was the purpose of the latest investigation in a conversation with Fox News's Sean Hannity: "Everybody thought Hillary Clinton was unbeatable, right? But we put together a Benghazi special committee, a select committee. What are her numbers today? Her numbers are dropping."[71] The response to McCarthy's comments was enough to force him to drop out of the race for speaker of the House, but he may not have been far off; a month after the election the Benghazi special committee released its final report (which had been released in preliminary form before the election) and closed down with little publicity and no significant new findings.[72]

The United States depends on citizens making informed decisions when choosing our representatives for our system of government to work. While I was working on this project I would often switch between the evening cable political channels, sometimes listen to talk radio on my commute, and spend (too much) time looking at various political news websites to get a sense of the different information environments available

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70 Mark Lichtblau, "F.B.I. Director James Comey Recommends No Charges For Hillary Clinton On Email," *The New York Times*, July 6, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/06/us/politics/hillary-clinton-fbi-email-comey.html?_r=0.

71 "Rep. Kevin Mccarthy How He Would Differ From John Boehner," *Fox News*, accessed April 4, 2017, http://video.foxnews.com/v/4519442873001/?#sp=show-clips.

72 "House Benghazi Committee Files Final Report And Shuts Down," *NBC News*, accessed April 5, 2017, http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/house-benghazi-committee-files-final-report-shuts-down-n695181.

to today's voter. My dissertation is a study of how these different media play a role in social movements by shaping the perception of reality for audiences. To better understand the theoretical foundations for this project, it is important to consider how others have conceptualized social movements, media, and populism. In this chapter I discuss the framework I use to analyze the narratives of the Tea Party and Occupy in subsequent chapters. First, I define my position in the relevant debates over social movements and hegemony. Then, I review media theory that informs my perspective. Next, I discuss populist rhetoric and Deleuze's concept of the virtual to advance the theory of "virtual movements." Finally, I describe my method for analysis of populist rhetoric. In a world where you can choose your political perspective by changing the channel or loading a different webpage, virtual movements are an attempt to remake reality in the image of the narrative.

A NOTE ON POLITICAL MEDIA AND PERCEPTIONS

In 2013, one of the few stories not about Benghazi able to get traction in conservative media was what came to be known as the "IRS scandal," which serves as an example of successfully shaping reality in the image of the narrative. The Supreme Court's 2010 decision in the Citizen's United case overturning campaign finance regulations was good timing for the Tea Party. With non-profit organizations now able to raise and spend funds on campaigns with little to no oversight, there was a swell in applications for non-profit status with the IRS. Many of these groups incorporated as 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) non-profits, which are categories of tax-exempt status for social welfare organizations. Under IRS rules, which were not affected by the Citizen's United

decision, organizations filing under this status are expected to be primarily non-political (such as religious organizations), or non-partisan (civic education groups, for example).[73] They can do issue advocacy under the umbrella of the educational aspect of their charter, but as soon as they endorse candidates, contribute to specific campaigns either financially or through other means, or make politics their primary purpose these groups are potentially in violation of the law and subject to IRS investigation. It is not that the IRS bans the organizations from engaging in political activity, but political fundraising may be taxable and would require additional scrutiny to be in compliance with the law.

As Alex Altman and others have pointed out, the influx of applications came at a time when the IRS was facing cuts to their enforcement budget and they unwisely chose to respond by creating a kind of key word list to "flag" applications that may need extra attention.[74] This targeting involved both progressive and conservative groups, but considering that the Tea Party was explicitly anti-tax it should be no surprise that a majority of the groups whose applications were held up were conservative groups. Indeed, independent investigations have found that several Tea Party groups were involved in questionable activities such as spending most of the money they raised on fees to consulting firms owned by the people who founded those very groups.[75] When it

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73 "Social Welfare Organizations," *Internal Revenue Service*, accessed April 5, 2017, https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/other-non-profits/social-welfare-organizations.

74 Alex Altman, "The Real IRS Scandal," *Time*, accessed April 5, 2017, http://swampland.time.com/2013/05/14/the-real-irs-scandal/.
See also: Kurt Eichenwald, "The Real IRS Scandal That No One Is Talking About," *The Hive*, Accessed April 5, 2017, http://www.vanityfair.com/news/politics/2013/05/real-scandal-tea-party-irs-tax-code.

75 Stephanie Mencimer, "Actually, Tea Party Groups Gave The IRS Lots Of Good Reasons To Be Interested," *Mother Jones*, accessed April 5, 2017, http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2013/05/irs-tea-party-tax-problems.

came out that the IRS was investigating the paperwork of political organizations filing as non-political organizations, the attempt to enforce the law was quickly framed as a potential abuse of power by Obama himself. The claim that the Tea Party groups were being targeted for their political activities was an especially savvy move because, in effect, if the IRS were able to successfully apply the law in this case it would prove the scandal. But the perception of a scandal was enough to prompt congressional, FBI, and Department of Justice investigations that all found evidence of human error but no criminal liability. In fact, after further review some Tea Party groups had their applications approved and others had theirs denied, but on conservative websites the IRS scandal lives on. In both of these opening examples, perceptions of the controversy depend on media preferences.

One thing I have learned watching political media was that I am not fond of the expression "perception is reality."[76] This phrase is often repeated by pundits during discussions of the importance of "optics" to politics, and I think part of the reason I dislike it is that it is often invoked in the context of factual disputes in which it is implied that what is true is what you can get people to believe. It may be easy to believe that "perception is reality" if you are a marketer, public relations professional, or political

[76] Supposedly, this phrase can be traced back to the (in)famous "dirty trickster" Lee Atwater, though I was not able to find the original attribution. Atwater was well-known as a contributor to the "southern strategy" of Richard Nixon designed to attract white voters by implying support for racism. He was the mind behind the Willie Horton ad in George H.W. Bush's 1988 presidential campaign. Before he died, he expressed regret and confessed the things he had done. The main strategery he employed was "ratf**king," allegedly named after a story of Lyndon Johnson telling an aide to accuse an opponent of having relations with a farm animal. When the aide objected, Johnson is said to have replied with "I know, but I want him to have to deny it." In other words: Make an accusation because what people remember is the accusation and not the defense. Atwater's protege, Karl Rove, went on to become George W. Bush's political architect. See Forbes, Stefan Forbes, *Boogie Man: The Lee Atwater Story*, (Interpositive Media, 2010).

consultant whose main job is influencing perceptions, but for the rest of us the question is "whose perception is reality?" After all, if one's main source of political information is conservative talk radio, s/he might still be waiting for the results of the closed investigations into Benghazi and the IRS. In short, my problems with this proposition are: (1) It seems to universalize particular perspectives, eliding the possibility that one might be wrong; (2) it creates the conditions for seeing other viewpoints as a threat to one's own sovereignty over reality; and (3) it equates one's perspective with the real world itself, thereby erasing the reality that exists independent of our perception of it. In other words, the idea that "perception is reality" makes a world of a billion little popes uttering their infallibilities into a hall of mirrors. As my examples above show, the criteria for a perspective to influence the world is not whether it has a grounding in empirical evidence but whether people believe it. The core of this project is a critique of the politics of representation, in which groups frame their view of the world as most deserving of power.

LITERATURE REVIEW: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND HEGEMONY

> Struggles occur only on the basis of a common sense and established values, for the attainment of current values (honours, wealth and power). A strange struggle among consciousnesses for the conquest of the trophy constituted by the *Cogitatio natura universalis*, the trophy of pure recognition and representation.
>
> --Gilles Deleuze[77]

Rhetorical scholars have long understood the importance of social movements as an area of study. The United States was founded on a conflict over representation and

[77] Gilles Deleuze. *Difference and Repetition*, Trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 136.

much of our history has been the continuation of this struggle as various groups have laid claim to the inheritance promised in the Enlightenment ideals of equality, liberty, and popular sovereignty. The First Amendment rights of freedom of speech, petition, and peaceable assembly set the rules for challenging the existing order. Traditionally, these movements have produced great orators like Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., which make them natural foci for rhetorical analysis. My dissertation expands upon previous scholarship on the rhetoric of social movements by forwarding a new theorization of movement rhetoric in the Information Age. In this section, I will review the relevant literature on social movements to illustrate the key debates in the field that my dissertation will engage. I begin by discussing definitional issues about what constitutes a social movement; next I discuss the process of social movement as a form of hegemony politics; finally, I discuss how social movements publicize their demands to influence public discourse.

One of the major issues that rhetorical scholars studying social movements have been concerned with is defining "social movement" itself. Although there has been much debate over this term in the discipline of communication studies, I find most resonance with those who argue that we should take *movement*—dynamism, activity—seriously when we talk about social movements. The objects of this study are collective efforts to move from one sociopolitical order to another, which entails a rhetorical construction of spatiotemporal territories. What motivates identification with and participation in either the Tea Party or Occupy is a shared sense of where we have been, where we are, and

where we should go. In this respect, I ground my project in the definition that Leland M. Griffin advanced in his germinal call for the study of movement rhetoric in 1952:

> Let us say that an historical movement has occurred when, at some time in the past: 1. men [sic] have become dissatisfied with some aspect of their environment; 2. they desire change – social, economic, political, religious, intellectual, or otherwise – and desiring change, they make efforts to alter their environment; 3. eventually, their efforts result in some degree of success or failure; the desired change is, or is not, effected; and we may say that the historical movement has come to its termination.[78]

Griffin is suggesting that movements arise as the response to a situation, and this, in turn, requires rhetoric to persuade people to participate and to agitate for change.[79] As movements perpetuate their perceptions of the political environment to motivate change, they rhetorically construct what I term "territories" within the larger discourse by laying claim to a specific narrative. Each narrative marks the spatiotemporal environment inhabited by the group claiming to be "the people," at the same time as it defines borders for that territory by identifying and externalizing threats to its integrity. Both the Tea Party and Occupy are collective efforts to motivate change as a response to the situation of the economic crisis that began in 2008, but their analyses of the problems that led to the crisis differ greatly as each group marks its discursive territory as a given spatiotemporal configuration. In other words, the question of rhetorical territories for the Tea Party and Occupy involves how they describe their political environment, how they

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78 Leland M. Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," in *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, 2nd Edition. eds. Charles E. Morris III and Stephen Howard Browne (State College PA: Strata Publishing, 2006), 10.

79 Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 1-14. My conception of the rhetorical situation is informed by Barbara Biesecker's application of deconstruction in "Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from within the Thematic of 'Différance.'" *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 22, no. 2 (1989): 110-130.

identify the threat to that environment, and what type of change to that environment they advocate.

Advocating change necessitates a rhetoric of confrontation in which an enemy is identified against whom the masses must struggle.[80] As Robert S. Cathcart argues, this confrontational form is a key characteristic of movement rhetoric: "Confrontation demands a response that goes beyond the actions of the confrontation itself. It is a dramatization created by the forced juxtaposing of two agents, one standing for the evil, erroneous system and the other upholding the new or 'perfect' order."[81] This narrative of confrontation becomes a way of rhetorically constructing a boundary between those in the group and the others that they struggle against.[82] In the texts that will serve as my case studies, rhetorical confrontation is over representation within a system that is understood as having betrayed its promise.

By saying that social movements are struggles over representation, we have to ask what it is that the system is failing to faithfully represent. In 1973, Robert L. Scott makes the observation that in their reaction to flaws in the status quo, members of social movements may often see themselves as the true representatives of traditional values: "people experience division as oppression, seek fresh identifications, find dominant

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80 Robert L. Scott and Donald K. Smith, "The Rhetoric of Confrontation," in *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, 2nd Edition. eds. Charles E. Morris III and Stephen Howard Browne. (State College PA: Strata Publishing, 2006), 28 – 35.

81 Robert S. Cathcart, "Movements: Confrontation as a Rhetorical Form," in in *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, 2nd Edition. eds. Charles E. Morris III and Stephen Howard Browne. (State College PA: Strata Publishing, 2006), 101.

82 This rhetoric constituting a people and articulating an enemy is the essence of populist rhetoric, which I discuss in more detail below.

groups hypocritical, and, in responding to hypocrisy, sound a conservative voice."[83] This conservative voice can clearly be seen in the Tea Party, which claims to be a return to "traditional" values, but a similar voice is also at work within the Occupy movement in rhetoric that calls for the fulfillment of the "American Dream." What is key here is that this struggle over representations is really a struggle *between* representations, in which the contest appears to be about the interpretation of the actual event of the economic crisis.

A crisis is often the condition for social movements because it disrupts our assumptions about the status quo and provides the opportunity for affective alliances as we respond to the traumatic event by constructing new social relations and communities of meaning. In other words, out of crisis comes a struggle for hegemony. Germinal theorist Antonio Gramsci opens his essay on "The State and Civil Society" by discussing how a crisis, especially an economic one, can give rise to a disturbance in the traditional political order when the people cease to identify with their representatives. "A 'crisis of authority' is spoken of," he says, and "this is precisely the crisis of hegemony, or the general crisis of the state."[84] A crisis of authority throws the existing system of representation into doubt among a people or public, and for this reason the essence of hegemonic struggle is finding new representations through which groups can find meaning and organize a reaction or response ("action"). It is a shared or common

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83 Robert L. Scott, "The Conservative Voice in Radical Rhetoric: A Common Response to Division," in *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, 2nd Edition. eds. Charles E. Morris III and Stephen Howard Browne. (State College PA: Strata Publishing, 2006), 71.

84 Antonio Gramsci, "State and Civil Society," in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publisher, 2010), 210.

meaning, or what passes as "common sense," that creates the consensus that governs a culture's politics.

Expanding on Gramsci's understanding of "hegemony" as struggles between blocs of people for political dominance, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe emphasize that hegemony is not imposed from above but rather emerges from the participation of various groups in this struggle as different elements become articulated to identities that unite these groups.[85] In short, the struggle for cultural hegemony is the conflict between movements over which one will produce the dominant narrative in our political discourse to respond to a crisis. Social movement changes the *world that is* by proposing *worlds that should be.*

In the United States, the Tea Party and Occupy each offer their adherents a different vision of a better political order. The rhetoric of these movements is my focus in this project, but movements are more than just a series of messages, as they concern material bodies engaging in protest and other activist tactics as people assemble themselves according to a common identification, seeking representation and redress for grievances. Sociologist Charles Tilly describes social movements as "a distinctive form of contentious politics – contentious in the sense that social movements involve collective making of claims that, if realized, would conflict with someone else's interests, politics in the sense that governments of one sort or another figure somehow in the claim making, whether as claimants, objects of claims, allies of the objects, or monitors of the

85 Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy,* (New York: Verso, 1995).

contention."[86] Because different groups may have different claims, social movements might find themselves conflicting over similar discursive terrain, as with the Tea Party and Occupy. As a form, Tilly says that social movements include:

> (1) campaigns of collective claims on target authorities; (2) an array of claim-making performances including special-purpose associations, public meetings, media statements, and demonstrations; [and] (3) public representations of the cause's worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment.[87]

The act of making claims entails a rhetorical performance that assembles masses of people into a collective that works together to affect change.

Social movements use rhetoric to constitute themselves by making identification possible for people aligned with the movement, to articulate their demands into claims that are made against the existing system, and to publicize themselves to a larger audience. Herbert Simons explains the criteria for rhetorical analysis of movements in a manner that is similar to the elements that Tilly discusses, however, Simons focuses on movements that have a clear leader: "Shorn of the controls that characterize formal organizations, yet required to perform the same internal functions, harassed from without, yet obligated to adapt to the external system, the leader of a social movement must constantly balance inherently conflicting demands on his position and on the movement he [sic] represents."[88] One of the questions this project will illuminate is how these

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86 Charles Tilly and Lesley J. Wood, *Social Movements*, 1768-2008 (New York: Paradigm Publishers, 2009), 3.

87 Tilly and Wood, 7.

88 Herbert W. Simons "Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements." in *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, 2nd Edition. eds. Charles E. Morris III and Stephen Howard Browne. (State College PA: Strata Publishing, 2006), 37.

conflicting demands operate in a movement without an established leader.[89] Both the Tea Party and Occupy made the lack of an official leader intrinsic to their claim to be the authentic people. Rather than focus on the rhetoric of a leader, my focus is on a a deeper issue: how does technology shape the perception of authority for each of these movements?

If we agree that social movements are struggles over representations that are often precipitated by a crisis, then my project basically comes down to an analysis of the representations under dispute between the Tea Party and Occupy. The space of this struggle is what Kevin Michael DeLuca and Jennifer Peeples call "the public screen."[90] In developing the concept of public screen, DeLuca and Peeples expand on existing public sphere theory in an attempt to account for an evolving media environment. Jürgen Habermas theorized the development of the bourgeois public sphere as an idealized place of discourse in which private individuals would come together as equals in places like coffee houses, saloons, and community halls in order to debate public issues using a common frame of reference and agreed upon norms of discussion.[91] DeLuca and Peeples argue that contemporary struggles play out on the "public screen" (television, the

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89 Scholars of social movements would recognize that the popular tendency to reduce a movement to identification with a leader effaces the collective struggle and organizing that goes on outside of the media spotlight; for example, the emphasis on Dr. King's role in the civil rights movement ignores the much broader struggle that involved many different organizations working together over decades. On the other hand, it is undeniable that King, Susan B. Anthony, Harvey Milk, and St. Paul of Tarsus acted as a catalyst to social change. I would speculate that the focus on "leaders" in the public memory of these movements is really a way to reinforce liberal individualism, but that is a different argument.

90 Kevin Michael DeLuca and Jennifer Peeples, "From Public Sphere to Public Screen: Democracy, Activism, and the 'Violence' of Seattle," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19, no. 2 (2002): 125-151.

91 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Boston: MIT Press, 1991).

Internet, and I suspect if they had known their dominance was coming, smartphones), and rather than operating according to norms of rationality, civility and consensus, the public screen operates according to logics of publicity, images, and dissemination. As they argue, "[o]ur starting premise, then, is that television and the Internet in concert have fundamentally transformed the media matrix that constitutes our social milieu, producing new forms of social organization and new modes of perception."[92] Another way of saying this would be the fairly obvious observation that most people's experience of national political life in the United States today takes place through the media of pages and screens: our perceptions about President Trump, for example, are not shaped by our personal experience of him as much as by the way he and his actions are framed through various media sources. As these media representations shape our perception of our political environment, they influence our attempts to change that environment. So what happens to the "public screen" when each of us carries around our own, personalized, public screens in the form of televisions, laptops, tablets, and smartphones?

Thus far I have reviewed some of the touchstones in the literature that ground my analysis of social movement rhetoric: how social movements are constituted; the purpose of social movements in struggle for hegemony; the territory for this struggle on the public screen as movements present their demands to the public and institutions. One factor that makes my project different from prior analyses is my focus on the impact of technology on the rhetoric of these movements. While several prior studies have looked at how these movements use technology to disseminate messages or how they are represented in

92 Deluca and Peeples, 131.

mainstream media, to my knowledge few studies have looked at how technology may influence the perceptions of political reality expressed in populist rhetoric in the Information Age. To this end I review relevant literature on media technology, social movements, and the media theory that inform this project next.

LITERATURE REVIEW: MEDIA TECHNOLOGY

> The Revolution will not be televised, it will be Tweeted.
>
> -- Graffiti in Taskim Square, Istanbul, Turkey, Summer 2013[93]

It has become a commonplace for academics and popular pundits alike to debate the role of technology in politics. Pessimists like Jodi Dean claim that social media contribute to a crisis of signification in which the shared meanings that ostensibly bound us together as a society before the Information Age have become fragmented, the institutions that propagated normative ideals that we could use as a common reference have broken down, and individuals are isolated into a narcissistic dystopia where "liking" a "cause" on Facebook substitutes for real collective action.[94] On the other hand, Tiziana Terranova argues that technologies such as those that make up the Internet create the potential for a more democratic society as the political currency of information is distributed in a more accessible way to more people, allowing for new connections between dispersed people that may disrupt existing power structures.[95] These thinkers' work are part of a larger scholarly debate between utopians who argue that new

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93 Christian Rice, "Taksim Square Protests: 13 Photos Showing Severity of the Protests," Mic.com, June 2, 2013, www.mic.com/articles/45849/taskim-square-protests-13-photos-showing-severity-of-the-protests.
94 Jodi Dean, *Blog Theory: Feedback and Capture in the Circuits of Drive* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010).
95 Tiziana Terranova, *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age* (London: Pluto Press, 2004).

communication technologies enable greater democracy and dystopians who claim that the Internet is just the latest means of capitalist control. This debate has become especially pertinent as the political order in many nations across the globe has transformed during the early 21st century, prompted in many cases by popular uprisings organized and publicized through new media technologies.

Turn on any of the cable political news channels or login to Facebook and you will see people offering their opinions about whatever the topic of the day is, and while "sounding off" might not have the same effect as voting, protest, or petition, these technologies mediate relationships between audiences in ways that affect how these audiences form connections and identifications with like-minded people for collective social action. An activist can turn from their first screen (television) to their second screen (laptop, tablet, or smartphone) and find communities of people whose responses to the events dramatized on television match their own. Technology facilitates our assortment into tribes that are not tied through familial bonds or physical proximity, but rather through a virtual territory in which the borders are marked rhetorically.[96] Most importantly, these tribes are defined by their set of shared meanings or "common sense." If we consider social movement as a hegemonic struggle between these virtual tribes, we must theorize how technology influences hegemonic struggle.

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[96] My use of the term "tribes" is in keeping with my discussion of the "rhetorical territories" of these movements; tribes are human groups that lay claim to territories or nomadically move across a territory. This terminology comes from anthropology, but is becoming increasingly common in psychology, evolutionary biology and political science. See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Nomadology: The War Machine*, trans. Brian Massumi (Los Angeles, Semiotext(e), 1986). Joshua Greene, *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason, and the Gap Between Us and Them* (New York: Penguin, 2013); Avi Tuschman, *Our Political Nature: The Evolutionary Origins of What Divides Us* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2013); Edward O. Wilson, *The Social Conquest of Earth* (New York: Liveright, 2012).

Technological developments have changed the way we participate in the political, as is shown in the proliferation of new social movements centered on a crisis of representation in the institutions of government, in which smart phones and social media facilitated the motivation and organization of people. Beginning in the spring of 2011, popular uprisings across the Middle East brought down the authoritarian governments of Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, while similar movements in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Iran, Jordan, Turkey, and Syria have been met with a mixture of concessions and violent repression. Images of these protests and their suppression by the establishment were disseminated through Facebook and other social media, prompting outrage and motivating people to get involved with movements in their own communities. From Barcelona to Athens, London to Madrid, Europeans have been protesting – and at times rioting – against systems of governance that have brought massive unemployment and hastened a debt crisis that threatens to undermine the international financial order. In the United States, the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008 created a situation in which economic uncertainty was channeled into the Tea Party and Occupy movements.

How does the changing media environment affect these movements? Previous studies have taken a functionalist approach to the relationship between media and social movements, but I tend to think of media in a way proposed by Peter Simonson: "*Medium of invention* (or *inventional medium*) is a heuristic concept I use to identify enabling contexts and communicative forms through which rhetorical invention occurs."[97]

97 Peter Simonson, *Refiguring Mass Communication: A History* (Urbana-Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 2010), 26.

Although Simonson's concept is much more expansive than my own focus on communication technology, the important thing to consider is how these technologies themselves become part of the context through which we may find the available means of persuasion.[98] My study differentiates between the rhetoric of the Tea Party and Occupy by their dominant media of invention, but both movements rely on the Internet for organization and dissemination. The development of the Internet in the last decade of the 20th century and its increasing importance as a communication medium in the early 21st corresponds to a trend to theorize social movements as "networks." The use of cell phones, text messages, blogs, message boards, and social networking sites by activists have the potential to expand the range of possible social movement actions and facilitate coordination.

Not all scholars agree that the Internet necessarily results in increased social movement activity and the expansion of democracy. In one study, Peter Van Aelst and Stefaan Walgrave analyzed anti-globalization websites and concluded, tentatively, that the Internet does provide a new means for networking participants and may facilitate the development of social movements.[99] Charles Tilly and Lesley J. Wood are somewhat more hesitant to accord the Internet a determining role in social movements of the future: "Reflecting on the place of communications technologies in social relations at large as well as in earlier social movements, we should remain skeptical of straightforward

98 See Peter Simonson, "Reinventing Invention, Again," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (2014): 299-322.

99 Peter Van Aelst and Stefaan Walgrave, "New Media, New Movements? The role of the Internet in shaping the 'anti-globalization' movement," In *Cyberprotest: New Media, Citizens and Social Movements*, ed. Wim van de Donk, Brian D. Loader, Paul G. Nixon and Dieter Rucht (New York: Routledge, 2004): 97-122.

technological determinism. Any influence these technologies have is mediated by preexisting cultures, practices, and competencies of users as well as their organizational routines (Garrett and Edwards 2007)."[100] They list among other variables that affect the utility of the Internet to social movements "[p]roliferation of international organization (both governmental and nongovernmental); increasing prominence of transnational corporations and financial networks; diminishing capacity of most states to control flows of goods, persons, capital, or contraband; and [and an] expansion of communications."[101] While it is clear that other factors influence the development of social movements, perhaps communication technologies provide the infrastructure that makes it possible for these other factors to be articulated to one another.

One of the ways communication technologies influence the development of political movements may be in what Natalie Jomini Stroud calls "partisan selective exposure."[102] In *Niche News*, Stroud discusses how confirmation bias leads us to often choose news sources that agree with our preexisting beliefs, and see as "biased" any information that contradicts our preconceived notions. The deregulation of broadcast media under Reagan and the development of cable news in the 1990s corresponded with the rise of the Internet, making it so that different groups can choose sources for political information that are tailored to them as a target market. The consequences of selective exposure, Stroud argues, are that polarization of the public may increase as partisans are

100 Tilly and Wood, 107.

101 Tilly and Wood, 107.

102 Natalia Jomini Stroud, *Niche News: The Politics of News Choice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

presented with incompatible political realities, while at the same time this may motivate them to become more politically active. A 2014 study by Pew confirms the trend, with those who self-identified as conservatives primarily relying on Fox News and similar right-wing outlets while those who identified as liberals tended to rely on a more diverse group of sources.[103] If social movements result from groups attempting to solve problems in the political environment, then to better understand the difference between the Tea Party and Occupy, we have to consider how media choices inform our perceptions of our political environment.

I suspect that there would be no Tea Party without cable news and talk radio, and Occupy would not have taken the form it did without social media, although both draw on previous movements. Communication technology is important in shaping our perception of political reality, but it can also allow us to connect with others who share our perspective in ways that overcome limitations of time and space. Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani agree that it is too soon to judge the impact of new communication technologies on social movement activities; however, they feel comfortable making a few predictions:

> In relation to political and social participation, we may safely expect CMC to operate as a powerful facilitator through 'the maintenance of dispersed face-to-face networks,' the development of cultural and 'socio-spatial enclaves,' and technical support to interest group activity (Calhoun 1998: 383-5). And it is certainly reasonable to expect the Internet to play a decisive role in connecting all sorts of communities that are either geographically dispersed (Rheingold 1993;

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103 Amy Mitchell, Jeffrey Gottfried, Jocelyn Kiley and Katerina Eva Matsa, "Political Polarization & Media Habits," *Pew Research Center*, October 21, 2014, http://www.journalism.org/2014/10/21/political-polarization-media-habits/.

> Pini, Brown, and Previte 2004) or forced to operate underground by the very nature of their activities (e.g. hate groups).[104]

In other words, the Internet allows the creation of new "tribes" not marked by geographical proximity, but by the type of virtual territory I have been discussing. Indeed, more recent studies have shown that the impact of the Internet on the organization of social movements must take into account that the Internet is organized through hubs that create hierarchies in the structure of communication. My study focuses on how these hierarchies are expressed in the rhetoric of the Tea Party and Occupy.

Joshua D. Atkinson and Laura Cooley describe the tendency of communication technology to influence the shape of social movement networks as "narrative capacity," which they define as "the efficiency of the listservs utilized by the different activist groups in circulating narratives throughout the network."[105] This means that the role of the Internet is not a determining one, but a potentiality:

> Networks with strong narrative capacity are able to effectively circulate narratives about social justice and resistance to most, if not all, activists within the network; networks with poor narrative capacity struggle in such circulation. Any confusion on the part of activists about the functions of any listservs used within the network can lead to poor narrative capacity, and fractures can develop between activist groups that hinder the construction of a broad 'multiplex' for resistance performance.[106]

Their observation about listservs could easily be applied to social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, and Tumbler, because each of these provides the infrastructure for the circulation of narratives. In other words, if we are to ask what the

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104 Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani. *Social Movements: An Introduction*. (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishing 2006), 133.

105 J.D. Atkinson and Laura Cooley. "Narrative Capacity, Resistance Performance, and the 'Shape' of New Social Movement Networks." *Communication Studies* 61, no. 3 (2010): 322.

106 Atkinson and Cooley, 322.

Internet means for new social movements, it really depends on how these technologies are used.

Although the Internet may provide the capacity for the circulation of narratives, these narratives do not necessarily translate into "action." Jodi Dean is more pessimistic about the potential for the Internet to increase connections that facilitate social movement organization. In her book *Blog Theory*, Dean argues that the Internet functions as a "circuit of drives" that serves to reinforce "communicative capitalism" by producing the illusion of participation through simulated activism, specifically in the form of blogs:

> [A]s displaced mediators, blogs access key features of communicative capitalism: the intensification of mediality in reflexive networks (communicating about communicating), the emergence of 'whatever beings' (beings who belong but not to anything in particular), and the circulation of affect (as networks generate and amplify spectacular effects). This access not only draws out the challenges to political organization under current conditions but also highlights the imperative for actually undertaking such organizing rather than presuming it will simply emerge: the very practices of media we enjoy, the practices that connect us to others and ostensibly end our alienation, appropriate and reassemble our longings into new forms of exploitation and control[107]

According to Dean, blogging (and presumably "micro-blogging," such as Twitter posts) produces the illusion of political action by fulfilling a fantasy of participation through expression. In communicative capitalism, as Dean argues, the "use value" of messages (meaning) has become secondary to their "exchange value" in circulation, making communication itself a means of capitalist production. Blogging is enjoyable, but ultimately may undermine the potential for solidarity.

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[107] Dean, Blog Theory, 29-30.

An alternative to Dean's pessimistic outlook can be found in Christine Harold's insightful book *OurSpace: Resisting the Corporate Control of Culture.*[108] In her analysis of culture jamming, Harold acknowledges that corporate attempts to control public consumption habits make resistance to capitalism in the 21st century a paradoxical question.[109] Like Dean, Harold recognizes the role of communicative capitalism in contemporary life, although she describes it with the Deleuzian concept of the "control society":

> Deleuze further pursued an observation Foucault made late in his career that we were undergoing a transformation from the disciplinarity necessary for an industrial economy, to a service economy organized in part through the *control* of consumer desires. Control societies do not operate through the confinement and silencing of individuals, but instead 'through continuous control and communication.' In a control society, people are not denied access to information and knowledge, but are instead granted ever greater access to them through the opening up of technologies and the hybridization of institutions. However, what might appear as new freedoms enable business to increasingly modulate every aspect of life. I suggest that the proliferation of branding strategies, in part, marks this shift from discipline to control. Because of this emerging shift from disciplinarity (which spotlights the political rhetoric of the nation-state) to control (which increasingly relies on the visual rhetoric of the market), the possibilities for political resistance have changed as well.[110]

Rather than call for a return to old forms of political resistance in the mode of Jodi Dean, Harold argues that the shift from discipline to control requires that we move beyond dialectical struggle in which the forms of control are reproduced. In control society publics or citizens are encouraged to "brand" themselves as "individuals" because capital

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108 Christine Harold. *OurSpace: Resisting the Corporate Control of Culture*. (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

109 Harold's conceptualization of power is consistent with Foucault's observation that power not only controls but also produces the means of resistance to control. For a good explanation of Foucault's understanding of power see Barbara Biesecker, "Michel Foucault and the Question of Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 25, no. 4 (1992): 351-364.

110 Harold, xxviii

has appropriated even traditional means of resistance as ways of producing identity and reinforcing the system. A good example of the spirit of revolution being channeled toward consumption of identity is the "Go Forth" campaign by Levi's jeans, in which poetry from Lord Byron or Charles Bukowski (among others) is read over images of protest and rebellion, as if buying mass-produced jeans is the ultimate act of individualism and the defiance of youth.[111] The Tea Party illustrates how a common symbolic identification and forms of activism can be reappropriated in the defense of the capitalist system, while Occupy ostensibly is an effort to move beyond identity as the basis for solidarity. As Harold argues, digital technologies may be tools of the system to produce social control, but they are tools that can also be used to resist that same system.

Harold argues for a Deleuzian mode of resistance through an intensification of the logics of capitalism that breaks down the boundaries through which corporations accumulate power:

> From branding to copyright proliferation, publics that unabashedly lay claim to the agency and tools produced by brand logics may be better situated to intervene in the current economy in interesting and ultimately more democratic ways. By availing themselves of the creativity and innovation that markets can foster, Creative Commons, for example, promotes a vision of the public commons that rejects simple binaries and instead promotes 'balance, compromise and moderation.[112]

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111 See Matthew Newton, "Levi's Latest 'Go Forth' Ad Romanticizes Youth Riots at the Wrong Time," *Forbes.com*, August 8, 2011, http://www.forbes.com/sites/matthewnewton/2011/08/10/levis-latest-go-forth-at-romanticizes-youth-riots-at-the-wrong-time.
A more recent example is the ad in which Kendall Jenner gives a police officer a Pepsi, thereby solving racism. See Daniel Victor. "Pepsi Pulls Ad Accused of Trivializing Black Lives Matter," *The New York Times*, April 5, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/05/business/kendall-jenner-pepsi-ad.html.
112 Harold, 157.

Creative Commons is an organization dedicated to providing open, public domain resources that developers can use to create web material. Of course, we can ask whether putting the means of production of discourse (rather than material goods) in the hands of the public produces any real structural change that has the potential to overcome the exploitative nature of the system of capitalism. But if we accept that capitalism has extended its range of control over communication itself in order to extract surplus creativity, then Harold's reading of culture jamming suggests that perhaps common folks can use these same tools to introduce a virus into the system. It is true that capitalism will adapt by attempting to inoculate itself, so what role do the Tea Party and Occupy play in (re)producing or resisting capitalist control?

Scholars disagree about the role of technology in social movements, and I intervene in this debate by looking at how technology influences the narratives that the Tea Party and Occupy have created. Media technologies are the infrastructure through which representations are proliferated, and so my focus is on the how different technologies influence the logic of representation in the Tea Party and Occupy. These technologies help shape the perception of the political environment that movements seek to change, and this may advance the interests of those who own the means of production of representations. My case studies examine how the Tea Party and Occupy produce narratives that help motivate collective action in the conflict over representation.

Movement Media Ecologies

Because the space of social movement contestation is the "public screen," or communication technologies, it is important to explicate the media theory that contributes

to my understanding of this process before moving on to my next section in which I focus on the theoretical understanding of populism that will guide my analysis. Marshall McLuhan famously said that media operate as an extension of our senses, and therefore media shape the way we interact with the world the same way our eyes, ears, etc. do: by processing the information through which our perceptions of the world are formed and expanding our experience beyond our immediate environment.[113] Where our ancestors used their senses to gather information about imminent threats like a mastodon stampede or an oncoming horde of Goths, we use communication technologies to gather information about imaginary threats like terrorism or Justin Bieber.

Radio, film, television, personal computers, cell phones, the Internet, and social media like Facebook and Twitter have become ubiquitous apparatuses of our daily life that change the ways we relate to our world and others, and as rhetorical critics, it is important that we interrogate the influence of these technologies on the distribution of power, especially as each of these apparatuses is used as a type of persuasion machine. As Mark Deuze puts it, media are as much a part of our lives as water is part of the life of a fish, and play a vital role in shaping us: "Media extend social relations into time and space, while at the same time reminding users who they are (supposed to be), or can be."[114] In short: Communication technologies expand the horizon for the "available means of persuasion" beyond any scope that Aristotle could have imagined because each

113 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Berkeley, CA: Ginko Press, 2003).
114 Mark Deuze, *Media Life* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2012), 174.

new medium is a new means through which our attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors can be influenced.

The germinal inspiration for my understanding of media is McLuhan's own greatest influence: Harold Innis. As James Carey explains, both Innis and McLuhan developed the idea that communication technologies have a central role in shaping society because they by allow people to share their thoughts: "Communications technology, on the other hand, is an extension of thought, of consciousness, of man's unique perceptual capacities. Thus communication media, broadly used to include all modes of symbolic representation, are literally extensions of mind."[115] Not only do these technologies allow us to share our thoughts, they also help shape them, according to Innis. Trained as an economist, Innis analyzed the role of communication technology from early oral cultures through the development of writing to today's mass media.[116] His thesis is that communication media shape our relation to time and space: "The character of the medium of communication tends to create a bias in civilization favourable to an over-emphasis on the time concept or on the space concept and only at rare intervals are the biases offset by the influence of another medium and stability achieved."[117] To illustrate this, Innis contrasts early writing on clay tablets, which are relatively hard to move and lasting and therefore create a bias toward time and creating stable institutions, and writing on papyrus, which is easily disseminated and allows for an expansion in the

115 James W. Carey, "Harold Adams Innis and Marshall McLuhan," *The Antioch Review* 27, no 1. (1967): 7.

116 Harold A. Innis, *Empire and Communications* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

117 Harold A. Innis, *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 64.

governable territory and an emphasis on space.[118] You can see this alteration of the perception of space and time yourself by logging onto Facebook and seeing a constant stream of updates from around the world that flow by in a perpetual present, or going to Netflix to access the archive of a century worth of film and television.

So how does the Tea Party, composed mostly of Baby Boomers who grew up with radio, film and television, adapt to the onslaught of imminent threats brought to them daily by cable news and the Internet? How do the "digital natives" of the Occupy movement use new technologies to mark virtual territories when facing the possibility that debt, unemployment and climate change will prevent them from establishing a stable physical territory? While I will go into more detail as I apply Innis's theorization to my case studies, what is important to note here is that the properties of these media shape our relationship to time and space.

Finally, when I say that these movements are struggling over representations of the economic crisis it entails one last insight from the social movement and media literature that links to the coming section on populist rhetoric. One useful contribution of the new social movement literature concerns the production of meaning through the use of frames. As Elisabeth S. Clemens explains, social movements may provide members with a way of understanding their experience through the use of schemata through which they can make sense of reality.[119] These collective action frames can help provide

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118 Innis, *Empire and Communications.*

119 Elisabeth S. Clemens, "Organizational Form as Frame: Collective Identity and Political Strategy in the American Labor Movement, 1880-1920," in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framing*, eds. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008). 210-211.

coherence to social movements as members identify with each other through their common understanding of reality and common purpose.[120] This approach is indebted to both Erving Goffman and Pierre Bordieu, as frames become cultural capital that can increase the influence of social movements on the larger body politic. Framing also plays a role in influencing public perception of a social movement, as social movements engage frames to publicize their demands.[121] At the same time, the framing of social movements in the media is not completely within the control of the movement, as media actors and corporate interests engage frames that affect the public's view of a movement.[122] In the Tea Party and Occupy, a common frame that is used both by members of the movement and the media is "populism." But what is populism?

THE POPULIST FRAME: TRIBES AND TERRITORIES

> And when crowds move outside the square, to the side street or the back alley, to the neighborhoods where streets are not yet paved, then something more happens. At such a moment, politics is no longer defined as the exclusive business of a public sphere distinct from a private one, but it crosses that line again and again, bringing attention to the way that politics is already in the home, or on the street, or in the neighborhood, or indeed in those virtual spaces that are unbound by the architecture of the public square.
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> – Judith Butler[123]

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120 Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 611-639.

121 Bert Klandermans and Sjoerd Goslinga, "Media Discourse, Movement Publicity, and the Generation of Collective Action Frames: Theoretical and Empirical Exercises in Meaning Construction," in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framing*, eds. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 312-337.

122 John A. Noakes and Karin Gwinn Wilkins, "Shifting Frames of the Palestinian Movement in U.S. News," *Media, Culture and Society* 24 (2002): 649-671.

123 Judith Butler, "Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street," *European Institute for Progressive Cultural Politics*, September 2001, http://www.eipcp.net/transversal/1011/butler/en.

We often forget that after the American Revolution it took years for the political system as we know it to develop as different groups attempted to work out the meaning of popular sovereignty in a representative framework. In 1786 a tax revolt in western Massachusetts--now known as Shay's Rebellion--moved from protests to armed unrest over perceived corruption, taxation and failure of representation, which, according to political scientist Ronald P. Formisano, helped lead to the downfall of the Articles of Confederation and the creation of the Constitution.[124] Populist uprisings continued throughout the next few years, often fueled by or condemned by the partisan newspapers of the time that early Americans devoured voraciously as a way of keeping up with their new political system. With a few precursors but most notably with Andrew Jackson, even party politicians began framing their campaigns using the tropes of populist rhetoric. Over the coming decades, this populist frame became predominant in American political discourse. This pattern continues today.

Speaking most broadly, populism is an appeal to "the people" as the legitimating authority for political action, which means that populist rhetoric is nearly equivalent to the rhetoric of democracy as rule of the people. Indeed, as Howard S. Erlich explains, party politicians like Jimmy Carter have used populism in order to legitimate their democratic rhetoric[125]. This appeal to populism is built into our system as a democratic

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[124] Ronald P. Formisano, *For the People: American Populist Movements from the Revolution to the 1850s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

[125] Howard S. Erlich. "Populist Rhetoric Reassessed: A Paradox," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 62 (1977):140- 151.

validation for representative government. Ernesto Laclau offers an insightful discussion of this process:

> Democratic theory, starting with Rousseau, has always been highly suspicious of representation, and has accepted it only as a lesser evil, given the impossibility of direct democracy in large communities like modern nation-states. Given these premises, democracy has to be as transparent as possible: the representative has to transmit as faithfully as possible the will of those he represents. In this, however, a fair description of what is actually involved in a process of representation? There are good reasons to think that it is not. The function of the representative is not simply to transmit the will of those he represents, but to give credibility to that will in a milieu different from the one in which it was originally constituted. That will is always the will of a sectorial group, and the representative has to show that it is compatible with the interests of the community as a whole.[126]

In the politics of representation, popular sovereignty is delegated to elected officials in a metonymic substitution of a part for the whole.[127] When those elected officials fail to meet the demands of their constituents, there is potential for populist movements to claim the mantle of true representation from the status quo. But who are "the people" that the populist claims to represent?

Michael Calvin McGee attempts to identify the concept of the people with an articulation of the objective reality of individuals to a social fantasy: "The most important point . . . is that 'the people' are more *process* than *phenomenon.* That is, they are conjured into objective reality, remain so long as the rhetoric which defined them has force, and in the end wilt away, becoming once again merely a collection of

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126 Ernesto Laclau. *On Populist Reason*. (London: Verso, 2005), 158.

127 This politics of representation is built into the U.S. Constitution, and the reasoning behind it is explained in The Federalist Papers. It is the tension between the virtual idea of democracy and the actual practice of representation that drives American politics.

individuals."[128] While this conceptualization has the advantage of temporalizing "the people," it should also be seen as a call to consider the failure of the concept "the people" to be identical to the totality of the population. Populist rhetoric substitutes a specific group for the general populace. In the confrontation between the Tea Party and Occupy, each uses populist rhetoric to claim their own group as the legitimate people. The problem is that by "constituting" his or her audience as "the people," the populist rhetor attempts to conflate diverse interests, demands and desires into a totalizing whole, which is always a failed totality.[129] This inevitable failure of representation leads to new crises that lead to new populist movements as different groups struggle to change the political environment by claiming to be the true people with the right to govern.

As we saw earlier, social movements arise as a response to a perceived crisis, and the populist frame provides those movements with a rhetorical form. Ronald Lee, in his comparison of what he called the "New Populism" of leftists during the 1980s to populist rhetoric of the 19th century, identified "crisis" as one of the key components of populist rhetoric: "America faces a crisis in 'world view' personified by the contrast between 'General Armstrong Custer…archetype 19th century *Man* of the American West' and 'Henry David Thoreau, the opposite of Custer, who denounced both the corporate-

128 Michael Calvin McGee, "In Search of the People," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61, no. 3 (1975): 242.

129 My inclusion of the word "constituting" in scare quotes should indicate that my allusion to Charland's notion of "constitutive rhetoric" is a skeptical one, as it seems to me to be a linguistic determinism in which rhetoric creates material reality. See Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the 'Peuple Quebecois,'" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73, no. 2 (1987): 133-150. For a critique of constitutive rhetoric see Ronald Walter Greene, "Another Materialist Rhetoric," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 15, no 1 (1998): 21-40. Greene's advocacy of "articulation theory," is, I believe a better way of understanding the role of rhetoric, as should be clear through my use of Laclau and Mouffe.

industrial age from Walden Pond and the Mexican War from a prison cell.'"[130] In the 19th century, according to Lee, the right and the left could identify with one of these two poles of the American character as a way of stabilizing identity in response to crisis. This tendency for dichotomous populist identification has become somewhat of a tradition in the United States. Adrian Kuzminski argues that the very inception of the nation involved a conflict between the elitist Hamiltonian conception of representative democracy and the more populist decentralized vision of Thomas Jefferson.[131] Historians tend to agree that the agrarian revolt of the late 19th century that is traditionally called the Populist movement after the People's Party was a response to the failures of Reconstruction in the South and the increasing power of industrial capitalists.[132] Populist rhetoric is polarizing.

Because populist appeals are an attempt to substitute a part of the population for the whole "people," these types of appeals can be used to either expand or contract the range of acceptable discourse in society by lending legitimacy to some groups at the expense of others. As Michael Kazin explains in his extensive study of the uses of populist rhetoric in American history, populist appeals were often coopted by conservative forces during the 20th century largely as a response to the repeated crises created by the threat of the specter of Communism.[133] In these types of conservative

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130 Ronald Lee. "The New Populist Campaign for Economic Democracy: A Rhetorical Explanation." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 72 (1986): 276.

131 Adrian Kuzminski, *Fixing the System: A History of Populism, Ancient and Modern* (New York: Continuum, 2008).

132 See for example: Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Charles Postrel, *The Populist Vision*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Richard Hofstadter. *The Age of Reform*. (New York: Vintage, 1955).

133 Michael Kasin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

populist appeals, a myth is conjured in which an individual's right to participate in the political can be judged by their fidelity to some type of ideal American.

The Tea Party movement and Occupy are attempts to refigure "the American people" in response to the economic crisis that started in 2008 and the related crisis of neoliberalism that has its dual faces in the neoconservatism of George W. Bush and the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States.[134] This has been especially important for the Tea Party to negotiate, as their primary emphasis has been on traditional party politics. Dick Armey and Matt Kibbe argue in their *Tea Party Manifesto* that the movement is a reaction to the policies of George W. Bush and their continuation by Barack Obama in the form of the bailouts and stimulus packages each president proposed as a solution to the economic crisis.[135] Armey and Kibbe call on the Tea Party to take over the Republican party in order to rehabilitate the conservative tradition and its celebration of the "free market," small government, and individualism. So in addition to the objective, material economic crisis, we have here at the same time a "crisis of representation," which Ernesto Laclau says is "at the root of any populist, anti-institutional outburst."[136] Populist movements respond to this crisis of representation by rhetorically reconstituting the people using regular patterns that we can observe because of their repetition in political history.

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134 "Neoliberalism" is a concept that is important throughout my analysis, and for the purposes of this discussion it can be defined as a tendency to look to private sector solutions to public problems which entails a system of deregulation and privatization of public resources.

135 Dick Armey and Matt Kibbe, *Give Us Liberty: A Tea Party Manifesto* (New York: William Morrow, 2010).

136 Laclau, Populist Reason, 137.

Michael Lee's 2006 study of the populist argumentative frame describes its rhetorical form according to four themes: "Specifically, populism begins with the constitution of a virtuous 'people,' then envisions a robust 'enemy,' decries the current 'system,' and finally finds the promise of reform in 'apocalyptic confrontation.'"[137] As my method section will show, these themes provide the elements of analysis I will use in my case studies. My understanding of the relationship between "the people" and "the enemy," however, is informed by the work of Jeremy Engels, who, following Nietzsche, argues that the "constitution" of the people is not prior to the identification of an enemy but largely dependent on it.[138] While in one sense, Lee is correct in seeing the rise of populism in apocalyptic terms of preparing for a future (deferred) confrontation of good vs. evil, in another sense the apocalypse is a continuous operation of the rhetoric itself as an unveiling of the hidden mechanisms of power. This temporal dimension is important to my understanding of populism, as I am interested in how time is figured in my case studies. Let me elaborate by focusing on the first two themes Lee discusses through an explanation of the centrality of identity to populism.

Laclau opens his book *On Populist Reason* by explaining that "[t]he main issue addressed in this book is the nature and logics of the formation of collective identities."[139] Collective identification is integral to populist rhetoric as its efficacy depends on gathering diverse individuals, interests and demands together into a larger movement as a

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137 Michael J. Lee, "The Populist Chameleon: The People's party, Huey Long, George Wallace, and the Populist Argumentative Frame," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92, no. 4 (2006): 355-378.

138 Jeremy Engels, *Enemyship: Democracy and Counter-Revolution in the Early Republic* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2010).

139 Laclau, Populist Reason, 1.

metonymic substitution of part of the population for the whole.[140] In the United States, this collective identification is conjured by the foundation of the nation in the principle of popular sovereignty; by setting the framework for representative democracy as substitute for rule by the people, the constitutional convention set the initial conditions for the rise of populism as a dominant form of collective political action in the United States as various groups coalesce to contest claims to actually be "the people" in hegemonic struggle. In actual elections, however, "we the people" are expected to express our sovereignty through the dominant Democratic and Republican parties. The two-party system is a way of organizing this hegemonic struggle according to differing interpretations of the same Liberal ideology, but in times of crisis this collective identification loses its strength as the system fails to provide for the common welfare of the citizenry. It is under such conditions that the Tea Party arose as an attempt to rebrand the Republican Party and Occupy arose as an expression of the Left. Both groups claim to be "the people," but the most striking distinction between the two is the enemy against whom "the people" must struggle.

In populism, the identity of "the people" is defined by standing in opposition to another force. As Francisco Panizza explains, populism allows individuals to purge some of the anxiety aroused by a crisis by clearly defining those responsible for the crisis and urging collective efforts to stand against them:

> The approach understands populism as an anti-status quo discourse that simplifies the political space by symbolically dividing society between 'the people' (as the 'underdogs') and its *'other.'* Needless to say, the identity of both 'the people' and

[140] Laclau, Populist Reason, 93-95.

> '*the* other' are political constructs, symbolically constituted through the relation of antagonism, rather than sociological categories. Antagonism is thus a mode of identification in which the relation between its form (the people as signifier) and its content (the people as signified) is given by the very process of naming – that is, of establishing who the enemies of the people (and therefore the people itself) are.[141]

In establishing a border between "the people" and its "other," populist rhetoric allows movements to virtually mark their territory in both time and space. This division of the social space is a rhetorical practice that Laclau analyzes in depth in *On Populist Reason.*

As I alluded to above, *On Populist Reason* continues the theorization found in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy.*[142] In their previous book, Laclau and his frequent collaborator Chantal Mouffe expanded upon Gramsci's concept of hegemony as the antagonism between various social blocs for control of the State. Laclau and Mouffe argue that this process cannot be understood solely through the class antagonisms of classical Marxism, but rather as struggles between various subject positions articulated to discursive nodal points in a network of power. The Tea Party illustrates this power of identification well: In many ways the political antagonism between supporters of Barack Obama and the Tea Party movement is articulated to different interpretations of the signifier "American." In Obama's keynote address to the 2004 Democratic national convention, commonly called "The Audacity of Hope," Obama narrates his vision of America by telling his own life story as the son of a white woman from Kansas and a

141 Francisco Panizza, "Populism and the Mirror of Democracy," in *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, ed. Francisco Panizza (London: Verso, 2005), 3.
142 Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London: Verso, 1985).

Kenyan man.[143] As he illustrates in his famous "A More Perfect Union" speech, his vision of America is one in which its perfection is not in its past, but rather something to continually strive toward.[144] By contrast, Sarah Palin's speech to the 2008 Republican National convention proposes her running mate John McCain as the ideal American, whose fitness for the presidency is defined by his great deeds in the past[145]. After losing the election, McCain was replaced by Ronald Reagan, but the effect is the same: in order to perfect ourselves, according to Palin's vision, we have to return to the principles we have presumably lost, which are embodied by these representations from the past. We have to rediscover what it truly means to be an American, rather than expand the definition to be more inclusive, or even to the point that the power of the term "American" gives way to the cosmopolitanism of Occupy, in which the people are not divided according to correlation to an ideal of American, but in opposition to the assertion that "corporations are people."

Populism, Laclau argues, is the antagonism conjured by this crisis of representation. Laclau uses as his basic unit of analysis the demand rather than the individual or the group, so rather than look at the possible leaders of a group we will be more interested in the narrative invoked in each of the case studies and the demands that each narrative unifies into a coherent vision. As Laclau observes, populist rhetoric deals

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143 Barack Obama, "2004 Democratic National Convention Keynote Address," *American Rhetoric*, last accessed March 15, 2014.
http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/convention2004/barackobama2004dnc.htm.

144 Barack Obama, "A More Perfect Union," *BarackObama.com*, last accessed March 15,2014.
http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/hisownwords.

145 Sarah Palin, "Sarah Palin's Speech at the Republican National Convention," *New York Times*, last accessed March 15, 2014.
http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/president/conventions/videos/20080903_PALIN_SPEECH.html.

largely in abstractions or “empty signifiers” on which the audience can project their own meanings. The rhetoric provides the form to which the activists provide the content. His model of populist rhetoric begins when a heterogeneous set of demands cannot be assimilated into the existing system (crisis). Next, a frontier is created that separates the heterogeneous set of demands from the status quo (critique of the system / identification of an enemy). Next an "equivalential chain"—or an association—is created between the demands that are united around a central signifier (identification).[146] In my case studies I will discuss how the Tea Party and Occupy respond to crisis through the rhetorical creation of a frontier between “us” and “them” which is such an important part of populist rhetoric.

Throughout this chapter I have talked about social/political movements in the Information Age as “tribes” that rhetorically mark their territories as a way of defining “the people” in opposition to outside forces that threaten them in a crisis of representation. We can see the beginning of the formation of the frontier Laclau discusses when he talks about the “two clear preconditions for populism: (1) the formation of an internal antagonistic frontier separating the ‘people’ from power; and (2) an equivalential articulation of demands making the emergence of the ‘people’ possible.”[147] Populist movements work by marking their virtual territory and working together as a tribe to protect this territory. My case studies examine how the Tea Party and Occupy frame this

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146 I recognize that I am simplifying his system by conflating two parts of the process, but I do so in order to avoid going into theoretical tangents. My paraphrase is based on his summary when discussing the populist logic at work in the Boulangist movement on pages 180-181.

147 Laclau, Populist Reason, 74.

territory as virtual configurations of time and space through narratives disseminated by and shaped by media technology. The current crisis of capitalism becomes the space of dispute between the Baby Boomer Tea Party attempting to defend the past against the future and the Millennial Occupiers trying to save the future from the past. Populism works as an actualization of politics, which at the same time helps to defer democracy through representation.

Finally, when I say that "populism is an actualization of politics," I am invoking the theoretical vocabulary of the virtual/actual from Gilles Deleuze that is, admittedly, difficult to define but important to my conceptualization.[148] The most succinct definition Deleuze offers of the "virtual" is from a discussion of Henri Bergson's analysis of Marcel Proust's use of memory in his novels: "Here again Proust's formula best defines the states of virtuality: 'real without being actual, ideal without being abstract."[149] Memory is real because our memories affect how we think and act in the actual world, but our memories do not exist in any objective sense. We do not remember abstractions, but concrete details. The "actual" is empirical reality or what exists now. The actual is active. The past and future are thus "virtual." The past does not exist, but as Deleuze says in *Difference and Repetition*, it persists or subsists within the present through its effects.[150] The past affects the present in different ways. On the one hand, the past includes billions

148 Deleuze developed these concepts as a kind of mutation of Hegel, so they cannot be directly translated into the dialectical formulations we are often familiar with, nor is there is an exact correspondence with Lacan's registers of experience. I do think, however, that the closest analogy would be the distinction between "latent" (virtual) and "manifest" (actual) in Freudian thought.

149 Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Barbara Habberjam, and Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Zone Books, 2011), 96.

150 See Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 71.

of people and other animals who lived their lives and are now forgotten but who made the world we live in (for example, each of us has genes of prior generations who are mostly people we know nothing about, but that is part of who we are). On the other hand, there is history or memory which provides the meaning/justification for why things are the way they are, and acts as a guide for decisions that become the future.

The virtual is the field of differential relations that becomes actualized, as Brian Massumi explains.[151] For example, the actual interaction between an employer and employee depends on a virtual field of social relations that structures capitalism. At the same time as our actual experience is extracted from the virtual, according to Nathan Widder the virtual provides us with the structures of interpretation through which we make meaning of that experience: "This is precisely what Deleuze calls the virtual: an immanent network of relations that constitutes the sense of actual experience[152]." John Protevi illustrates this idea with the example of sports: The actual game you are watching depends on the players following a set of rules (virtual), and your interpretation of what they are doing depends on that same virtual idea of the game[153]. Massumi has another example that resonates with my project: In his analysis of Homeland Security's terror alert system during the Bush administration, Massumi argues that the power of the "threat" derives precisely from its virtuality.[154] Because the threat was never exhausted in

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151 For a detailed discussion, see the first chapter of Brian Massumi, *Parables for The Virtual*. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007).

152 Nathan Widder, *Political Theory After Deleuze*, (London: Continuum, 2012),.Location 830 on the Kindle.

153 John Protevi, *Political Affect* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 14.

154 Brian Massumi, "Fear (The Spectrum Said)," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 13 (1): 31-48.

its actualization (even in specific terrorist incidents), the government could use the fear of what may happen to justify a whole series of policies.[155] My own final example is "voter fraud." It does not matter how rare voter fraud *actually* is, after years of telling people that voter fraud is a problem, Republicans have turned to using the *perception* of voter fraud as justification for passing laws that may suppress authorized voters according to a recent article in the *New York Times.*[156] Voter fraud, along with the examples I opened this chapter with, illustrates another way Deleuze often described these concepts: Virtual problems affect actual solutions. This conceptualization is useful to theorizing the role of rhetoric in social movements as a way of shaping and responding to perceived problems (real or not) by motivating groups to collective action around shared meanings and identities.

Traditional rhetorical criticism privileges identity as the basis from which to judge how a movement's rhetoric fails or succeeds at representing reality, which leaves us wondering why so many people would be invested in narratives that are obviously false. What the theory of Virtual Movements offers is a way of thinking about how it is precisely the *difference* between the representation and reality that motivates social change. In other words, rhetorical agency does not originate in an ideal discourse or material reality but it is the relationship between the two in the claim to reduce pure difference to perfect identity that gives these groups their meaning and their force.

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155 The Trump administration used this logic in the initial claim that the executive order banning travel from several predominantly Muslim countries was necessary because of an imminent threat. After the ban was put on hold by the 9th circuit court, the threat apparently became less urgent as it took them weeks to come up with a new order.

156 Michael Wines, "One Rationale For Voter ID Debunked, G.O.P. Has Another," *New York Times*, March 23, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/23/us/election-fraud-voter-ids.html?_r=0.

Politics is the contestation and negotiation of power in a society, insofar as power affects the distribution of resources necessary for survival and prosperity. Populism is the actualization of politics because it is the process through which this contestation is put into practice. Our closest primate relatives, chimpanzees, travel in "troops" that lay claim to territory, wage war with other troops over this territory and have internal conflict over the distribution of resources in that territory, but their language is much less developed and their cultures are limited to direct experience with other chimpanzees.[157] Humans are able to form much larger groups than other animals, partly because we have symbolic language and can create common narratives that unite groups through territorial claims that are not simply kinship-based. Humans also have the advantage that writing allows us to transmit culture to those with whom we have no physical or contemporary contact. Our creation of virtual environments through media technology means that the territory and resources that we lay claim to are not strictly physical, but discursive as well. Through rhetoric, humans form tribes that develop solidarity through various affective and symbolic processes of identification, while also creating a border or frontier to the tribe's territory by channeling negative affect aroused by a crisis onto an enemy. This contestation with an enemy diverts the flow of negative affect aroused by the event of a crisis that threatens the tribe, and allows the paranoid affirmation of the self by building a frontier that separates friend from enemy, and allows a return to certainty by projecting all evil onto outsiders.

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157 Though as an alternative, our other closest relative, bonobos generally use sex rather than violence to negotiate power differences. Apparently this is because the environment they inhabit is more hospitable, so there is less conflict over resources. See Avi Tuschmann's discussion of "the biology of tribalism" in *Our Political Nature*, pgs. 214-244.

Virtual movements produce shared meanings and engage in political activity as an attempt to actualize their idea of a better world. The populist frame provides the form for this rhetoric. In short, populist rhetoric helps channel the response to a crisis that threatens our extant fantasies into a narrative that allows the audience to identify themselves as powerful agents of good in a struggle against the absolute enemy whose agency is responsible for all evil, including the crisis that aroused the affect itself. That is not to say that there is not an objective reality that is described with more or less utility by these narratives, or that these narratives are good or bad; it is just to say that these narratives are fictions through which we may create meaning, and that in the hands of the oppressed they can be powerful tools for creating solidarity, while these discourses can also be used as means of domination.

So far I have reviewed significant literature on social movements to illustrate my understanding that social movements are collective efforts to move from one social order to another. These movements arise as a response to a crisis in which the existing system does not faithfully represent the interests of those in the movement. When social movements attempt to change the system, their interests may conflict with others, which results in hegemonic struggle. In the contemporary United States, this struggle largely takes place through "the media," as it is communication technology that shapes our understanding of the political order and allows us to connect with others to organize movements that are not defined by geographical proximity. In a system ostensibly built on representation, one of the dominant frames for social movement rhetoric is the

populist frame, in which that movement claims to be an attempt to give power back to the people.

The populist frame involves responding to a crisis by identifying an enemy against whom the people must struggle. Thus, populist rhetoric constitutes virtual "tribes" united around a common identity to defend their discursive territory against outside encroachment. My analysis will focus on how the narratives of the Tea Party and Occupy promote a common vision of the world and motivate efforts to reshape the world by changing the existing social and political order. We will look at how a common identity is constituted for these movements by articulating an enemy against whom members must struggle to protect or regain territory for these virtual tribes who see themselves as the true people. And we will look at how media technology influences this process by helping shape perception of the world that was, that is, and that is to come. The major concepts in this literature review can be summarized as follows:

- Social movements are a response to perceived flaw or crisis in the existing order.
- Media technologies shape our political perceptions in the United States.
- Populist rhetoric helps tribes create identities by placing blame for the crisis on an other.
- The theory of virtual movements is a way of thinking about how these tribes rhetorically construct territories through narratives that define the crisis and propose a solution.
- The "movement" in virtual movements is from one virtual territory to another as the tribes engage in political action to actualize their ideal of a better society.

Having laid out the theoretical background of my project, I now will describe my method of analysis for the case studies that follow.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS, METHOD, AND SELECTION OF TEXTS

> Capitalism is all the time in crisis. This is precisely why it appears almost indestructible. Crisis is not its obstacle. It is what pushes it forwards towards permanent self-revolutionizing, permanent extended self-reproduction.
>
> -- Slavoj Žižek[158]

The Tea Party and Occupy have garnered significant attention as each struggle for hegemony in the wake of the economic crisis of 2008. The exigency for my research is that these movements are attempts to use rhetoric to create very different political realities as a solution to the economic crisis. Both movements also invoke "the media" as part of the problem of representation that they respond to. As such, I believe we should examine the relationship of these movements to each other in the context of contemporary politics and a rapidly changing media environment. Previous research on these movements has shed light on some of the discursive and technological resources available to each. My project focuses of the logic of representation at work in these movements to understand how they expand or contract the range of acceptable political discourse.

My research questions deal primarily with the ways these groups are represented, how they represent themselves, and how these representations tell a story that so many identify with. My method of analysis involves searching for patterns in the representations available in each of these movements, under the assumption that we get

158 *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*, directed by Sophie Fiennes (2012; London: Zeitgeist Films.), Netflix Streaming.

many of our representations through media that extend our experience. What differentiates the Tea Party from Occupy? In what ways do they converge? How do these two groups represent the ranges of acceptable political discourse, and how might we move beyond that range to accommodate more voices? While some of these questions may be beyond my ability to answer, they are worth thinking about, and by looking closely at various texts from each movement we can begin to consider them.

I have laid out my assumptions about social movements as collective efforts to change the sociopolitical order. Social movements are struggles between groups of people over political representation. Today, these struggles over representation largely play out in the virtual territories of the media which help to shape our perceptions of the political. Because these movements are claiming to represent "the people," I conceptualize them as virtual tribes united around a common identity engaged in struggle over who should wield political power. These tribes come into being as a response to a crisis of representation, and they respond to this crisis by developing rhetorical territories that must be defended against a perceived threat from outside. Next, I will discuss methodological issues, starting with a review of my research questions before a discussion of my methods of analysis and text selection. My research questions all derive from the larger question of the logic of representation at work in each movement:

> RQ1: What are the narratives these groups construct as a response to the economic crisis, and how do these narratives create virtual territories in our political discourse?
>
> RQ2: How does each group differentiate the "true people" from their enemy?

RQ3: How does technology influence these movements from one virtual territory to another?

To study these questions I engage in a critical analysis of artifacts from each movement with attention to the contexts in which these texts are developed.

As may be apparent from my invocation of McKerrow's program for a "Critical Rhetoric," my approach to rhetorical analysis follows in the tradition that "seeks to unmask or demystify the discourse of power. The aim is to understand the integration of power/knowledge in society – what possibilities for change the integration invites or inhibits and what intervention strategies might be considered appropriate to effect social change."[159] My prior discussion of social movement, media, and populism contributes to the praxis of analyzing the discourses of power at work within the Tea Party and Occupy. My orientation to rhetorical criticism is influenced by Aristotle, Kenneth Burke, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida, but for the purposes of this project the plan for my case studies is a pretty straightforward application of the categories developed by previous studies of populism to texts from each movement. To illustrate this technique, I will briefly discuss Kenneth Burke's pentadic analysis and how I adapt it to an analysis of populism in accordance with insights from Michael Lee and Ernesto Laclau.

A Populist Pentad

In *A Grammar of Motives* Kenneth Burke describes a method for analyzing the "basic forms of thought[,] which, in accordance with the nature of the world as all men

159 McKerrow, 91.

(sic) necessarily experience it, are exemplified in the attribution of motives."[160] Humans create meaning from their experience through the production of narratives that use common terms, or representations, to describe it. These *terministic screens* mark the boundaries of the thinkable in a given discourse and can be analyzed using ratios between five terms, or the Pentad: "any complete statement about motives will offer *some kind of* answers to these five questions: what was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency), and why (purpose)."[161] Asking similar questions will help me to discern the pattern of the populist form at work in my case studies. Pentadic analysis examines the ratios between these terms to look at the possible meaning produced in a discourse.

In my case studies I analyze how patterns in the rhetoric of the Tea Party and Occupy constitute narratives through which adherents may come to understand their political experience. As I discussed earlier, Laclau argues that populist rhetoric produces identification through "empty signifiers" on which the assembled may project their preferred meanings. The key terms for populist rhetoric, as Michael Lee identifies them, are "the system," "the people," "the enemy," and "apocalyptic confrontation." Modifying this a bit with insights from Laclau and others and in the spirit of Burke's Pentad, the patterns I will look for involve:

A. Description of the crisis (what happened?)

B. Construction of a rhetorical territory (what is the situation/system?)

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160 Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), xv.
161 Burke, XV.

C. Articulation of an enemy (who did it?)

D. Identification of a people (who should have power/agency?)

E. Motivation toward actualization of representations (Where do we go from here?)

I examine the relationships between these representations to see how the answers to these questions help create a common sense and identification within each movement. My analysis in each case study looks at the ratios between aspects of the narrative (RQ1; A., B.), relationship between the people and their other (RQ2; C., D.), and impact of technology on this narrative (RQ3; B., E.). In chapter 3, my case study on the Tea Party shows how conservative media serve as a kind of priesthood that places blame for the crisis on the government. The opposition between the market and government is embodied by framing the true people as those who stand with Ronald Reagan against the usurpers who have found their champion in Barack Obama, and the solution is to return to the virtual territory of the past to restore fidelity to the Constitution. In chapter 4, I discuss how Occupy responds to the failure of both government and the market to produce the American Dream by attempting to create an "authentic" community of the 99% in opposition to corporations for control over the virtual territory of the future.

Texts/Contexts

My case studies look at contemporary populist rhetoric in social, political and cultural contexts. Because these groups are widely-dispersed and both consciously claimed to avoid the traditional leadership structure, my selection of texts involves a diverse collection of artifacts from the various contexts in which these movements operate. As McGee observes, critical rhetoricians examine the fragments that make up a

text with attention to the contexts in which they are created: "Critical rhetoric does not *begin* with a finished text in need of interpretation; rather, texts are understood to be larger than the apparently finished discourse that presents itself as transparent. The apparently finished discourse is in fact a dense reconstruction of all the bits of other discourses from which it was made."[162] My first case study on the Tea Party follows the move from a social movement to a political movement as their focus on electoral politics helped them gain significant influence at all levels of government. To get a better overall understanding of the narrative, I chose selections from Tea Party meetings, protests, media figures associated with the movement, and successful Tea Party candidates in the Federal legislative branch so that I would have examples from the grassroots activists, media figures, and politicians. Despite the lack of strict leadership, the Tea Party had various organizations that branded themselves as official Tea Party groups and my selection of texts is primarily based on their own claims that these texts represent the Tea Party.

Occupy rejected traditional electoral politics in favor of advocating for cultural change by influencing the national conversation on income inequality, debt, and the financial system. For this case study my primary texts come from the Tumblr page "We Are the 99 Percent," which allowed users to produce memes narrating their own experience of the economic crisis and advocating solidarity between "the 99 percent." My analysis moves from memes produced by people who identify with the movement to

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[162] Michael Calvin McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture," *Western Journal of Communication* 54 (1990): 279.

the structure of the movement itself, which claimed to reject representation, but developed a process for authenticating statements as official expressions of the movement. I focus on texts approved by the primary encampment in New York City in my analysis, as well as a critique of the process itself. These case studies will help us understand how media influence political representations in the contemporary context.

Chapter 3: Mourning in America

> A few months ago I told the American people I did not trade arms for hostages. My heart and my best intentions still tell me that's true, but the facts and the evidence tell me it is not.
>
> --Ronald Reagan's statement on the Iran Contra scandal, March 4, 1987[163]

On February 6, 2010, Ronald Reagan's birthday, members of the national Tea Party movement gathered in Nashville, Tennessee at a for-profit convention that brought activists together to train for the coming midterm elections. The highlights of this event included David Farah, editor-in-chief of right wing conspiracy news site World Net Daily, who claimed that Barack Obama was lying about his birthplace and therefore an illegitimate president.[164] This position was disputed behind the scenes by fellow blogger Andrew Breitbart, who was there to introduce the keynote speaker for the event: former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin. Breitbart criticized Farah for focusing on what he said was a losing issue, despite its popularity with members of the Tea Party.[165] Farah defended his allegations, arguing that it was Obama's burden to prove his birth certificate was genuine, and Farah's only job as a journalist was to "ask questions" and "seek truth." The question for Breitbart was not whether Farah's claim was true, but rather if it was an effective argument with general election appeal. Perhaps Breitbart's critique was rooted in concern

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163 Ronald Reagan, "Address To The Nation On Iran-Contra (March 4, 1987)—Miller Center," Millercenter.Org, accessed February, 20 2017, http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/speech-3414.

164 "Angela McGlowan And Joseph Farah At National Tea Party Convention," *C-SPAN.Org*, accessed February 20 2017, https://www.c-span.org/video/?291955-1/angela-mcglowan-joseph-farah-national-tea-party-convention.

165 David Weigel, "Birther Speaker Takes Heat At Tea Party Convention," *The Washington Independent*, accessed February 20 2017, https://web.archive.org/web/20140401152423/http://washingtonindependent.com/75949/birther-speaker-takes-heat-at-tea-party-convention.

that advocating such an easily disproven claim would undercut the premise on which both Breitbart and Farah based their businesses: The "liberal bias" of mainstream media means that they cannot be trusted and so conservatives must rely on their own information infrastructure to counter traditional press organizations. It was the media, after all, that threatened to humiliate their hero Reagan by exposing the scheme to send arms to Iran in exchange for hostages, just as the press had brought down Nixon before him. Additionally, questioning the first black president's legitimacy as a citizen might feed the perception that the Tea Party was motivated by racism. As an active advocate for the Tea Party, Breitbart often tried to turn these claims of racism against those making the accusation to discredit them. During his speech, he lambasted the "liberal media" for what he claimed were false representations of the Tea Party and the contemporary political climate, going so far as to point at the cameras that were covering the rally and identifying them as the enemy.

Distrust toward traditional journalism is one of the central themes of the Tea Party. The irony is that often the loudest voices in the conservative movement decrying the power of the "media" are those on television, the radio, or on popular websites. The opportunity to promote an alternative to more established institutions of information has been good business for commentators like Sean Hannity, Glenn Beck, and the late Andrew Breitbart. The initial Tea Party events had a permeable membrane between conservative media figures reporting on the rallies and actively participating in them, which allowed them a chance to promote their work to a target audience. A basic explanation for this phenomenon is simple marketing: audiences are more likely to

depend on a source if they are convinced that other sources are untrustworthy, so conservative media outlets have a vested interest in demonizing the competition. Recognizing that purveyors of this discourse benefit from it financially does not explain how it works to influence political perceptions, however.

Why is promoting distrust of information sources so rhetorically effective? One answer is that the logic of the commonplace "biased liberal media" is self-sealing: The validity of information can be determined by evaluating the source providing it. This evaluation is a simple matter of deciding whether the source is "biased." If a source reports information that contradicts one's pre-exiting beliefs, this proves that the source cannot be trusted. Any cognitive dissonance or uncertainty is slain by invoking confirmation bias as the highest form of reason. In this way, the principle of "narrative fidelity" from rhetorician Walter Fisher's theory of narrative rationality is reversed in the name of maintaining the clear certainty of narrative coherence.[166] For Fisher, "narrative fidelity is a matter of truth according to the doctrine of correspondence."[167] Fisher argues that narratives can be judged according to their fidelity to an outside world, including facts, norms of argumentation, and our own experience. In the contemporary conservative media environment, the validity of reality is judged by its fidelity to the narrative. For the

166 Walter R. Fisher, "Narration As A Human Communication Paradigm: The Case Of Public Moral Argument." *Communication Monographs* 51 (1): 1-22.
167 Fisher, 16.

Tea Party, the crisis of representation is not a failure to represent reality, but rather that reality is not faithful to the representations.[168]

Because the Tea Party is a response to a crisis of representation, in this chapter I examine how political perceptions are shaped by conservative media.[169] What is the narrative to which members of the Tea Party insist reality owes fidelity? To help answer these and related questions, this chapter has two parts. First, I examine the logic of representation at work in the Tea Party and how it has been perpetuated by the broadcast technologies of television and radio. Then, I use the criteria described in the previous chapter to analyze the narrative that helped the Tea Party make sense of the economic crisis and motivated them to action. I conclude with a discussion of how these material and discursive assemblages worked together in the Tea Party's constitution of its tribal territory. For members of the Tea Party, conservative media serve as a type of priesthood who unite their tribe through a mythos that conjures the spirit of Ronald Reagan to fight the apparition of Obama. This narrative projects blame for the economic crisis onto the government to restore faith in the "free market" as the true legacy of the Founding Fathers that we must return to, and invokes the trope of "liberal media" to inoculate

168 As problematic as I find the subject-object split, the reversal of narrative fidelity is that the traditional formula sees the "narrative" as a subjective interpretation of objective reality whereas the conservative formulation upholds their narrative as objective and rejects facts that don't accord with it as "biased" (subjective) and therefore untrue. By "reality" I am referring here to the world of everyday experience, with the caveat that the existence of this reality is not dependent on human interpretations of it.

169 A crisis of representation is a type of crisis of faith, because it is the doubt about the representations that creates the crisis. Perceptions may not be reality but they can change it. Whether God exists or not does not depend on our belief, but for the deeply religious person doubt about the existence of God can be life-shattering. Likewise, the perception that the government does not represent the people does not depend on whether the government passes policies that benefit the public to be a real crisis. In other words, the crisis is in the perception.

adherents against any contradictory information. The Tea Party's tribal identification is a call to protect the past from the future.

THE LOGIC OF REPRESENTATION IN CONSERVATIVE MEDIA

> Will he not fancy that the shadows which he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now shown to him?
>
> – Plato, "The Allegory of the Cave"[170]

Andrew Breitbart was an Internet pioneer.[171] After an apprenticeship with Matt Drudge of *The Drudge Report*, Breitbart helped start *The Huffington Post* before moving on to create his own series of websites that would eventually coalesce into *Breitbart.com*, which has become a primary source for many of the stories that bind the culture of contemporary conservatism. A self-described former liberal, Breitbart credited conservative talk radio with his political re-education when his dad stopped paying his bills after college and he needed to find a way to make money. Breitbart found his calling when he realized that he could use the developing technology of the Internet to create alternative information sources conservatives could rely on to support their perspective. In a 2011 speech to the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, Breitbart described his conversion to conservatism as the realization that the critical theory he had been exposed to as an undergraduate at Tulane -- including that of Gramsci, the Frankfurt School, and some poststructuralism -- had laid out the blueprint for a Leftist

170 Plato, *The Republic*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co, 2004).

171 Throughout this chapter I use "Breitbart" to refer to the person and "Breitbart.com" to refer to the website.

takeover of our national information infrastructure through "cultural Marxism."[172] According to Breitbart, the "liberal bias" that conservatives see in the media and the "political correctness" that they believe dominates college campuses are part of the same plot to undermine American values. Breitbart was so successful in branding himself as a culture warrior defending the conservative tribe that his online empire continued under the leadership of Steven K. Bannon (who [in]famously became Donald Trump's chief political adviser) after Breitbart's death in 2012 at the age of 42. The information infrastructure he helped to advance played an important role in shaping the political perceptions of members of the Tea Party movement.

Breitbart became a hero of the Tea Party who frequently spoke at their events and provided them with an online news source that explicitly based its credibility on its opposition to liberal media. He promoted himself as a champion for the Tea Party against accusations of racism by demanding that members of the Congressional Black Caucus provide video evidence of Tea Party protesters shouting racial slurs during a protest against the Affordable Care Act on March 20, 2010. Representatives John Lewis, James Clyburn, and other witnesses had said that they heard people shouting racial slurs at them as they entered the Capitol Building, but according to Breitbart unless it was videotaped they were lying. As support for his claim, he posted videos that the Associated Press later found to be from a different time that day which show them walking out of the building

172 "Andrew Breitbart At the Heritage Foundation," *YouTube*, accessed February 28, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPgT4KEPufs.

amid chants of "Kill the Bill" and no apparent racial slurs.[173] His resistance to the suggestion that anyone would use racist expressions during a Tea Party event was so intense he offered a $100,000 reward to anyone who could provide video of such a thing happening. No one ever collected the prize.[174]

Breitbart demanded video proof from others, but he was quite proficient in manufacturing evidence to support his own claims. He was successful enough in promoting the premise that Leftists are conspiring to illegitimately gain power that his spectacles were often picked up by Fox News and other more mainstream sources where they got the attention of members of Congress. One of his major successes was helping bring about the downfall of the voter registration organization Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) by releasing videos in which conservative activist James O'Keefe appeared to get ACORN employees to give him advice on setting up a prostitution business.[175] Perhaps because ACORN primarily worked to promote

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173 "N-Word Claims Ignite Feud After Health Protest," *Fox News*, accessed March 7, 2017. http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2010/04/13/wrong-video-health-protest-spurs-n-word-feud.html.

174 "No More Beer Summits: Tea Party 'N-Word' Incident Didn't Happen, And The Congressional Black Caucus Owes America An Apology - Breitbart" *Breitbart.com*.

175 "ACORN Official Videotaped Telling 'Pimp,' 'Prostitute' How to Lie to IRS," *FoxNews.com*, September 10, 2009, http://www.foxnews.com/story/2009/09/10/acorn-officials-videotaped-telling-pimp-prostitute-how-to-lie-to-irs.html.
O'Keefe was later convicted of fraud after posing as phone company employee in an attempt to wiretap Louisiana Senator Mary Landrieu's office. In 2014, he was caught dressed as a Democratic campaign worker at an event in Colorado in which he urged other workers to commit voter fraud.
Andy Kroll, "Colorado Dems: We Caught James O'Keefe and His Friends Trying to Bait Us Into Approving Voter Fraud," *Mother Jones* October 20, 2014, http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/10/colorado-dems-james-okeefe.
The Democratic campaign workers did not cooperate, but he later released videos of himself and his employees advocating voter fraud spliced with Democratic campaign workers talking about the importance of voting made to look as if they were condoning voter fraud. Despite being caught in the act of staging this voter fraud, conservative media promoted the video as if it were genuine: John Fund, "James O'Keefe Strikes Again," *The National Review*, October 22, 2014.

political participation in low-income and minority communities that tend to vote for Democrats, it didn't take much to convince his audience that it was a corrupt organization involved in widespread voter fraud and other illegal activities. These videos were later found to be duplicitously-edited, and O'Keefe settled out of court with one of the employees who was the subject of the videos, but by then the damage was done: Congress voted to defund ACORN, private donations to the organization stopped, and it filed for bankruptcy just in time for the midterm election in 2010.[176] The method of taking a fraudulent video and releasing portions of it over time to keep it in the news cycle has become a mainstay of right-wing media culture, and any attempt to discredit these videos is inoculated against because the critics are part of the "mainstream media."[177] Like conservative talk radio and Fox News before him, Breitbart was successful in building a media empire branded as an antidote to the "liberal media" and "political correctness" through the use of such tactics.

Breitbart is a good example of the Tea Party's reaction to liberal media in part because he helped the conservative media infrastructure to move from the alternative opinions of talk radio, or alternative narratives of cable news, to the triumph of

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176 Rick Ungar, "James O'Keefe Pays $100,000 to ACORN Employee He Smeared-Conservative Media Yawns." *FORBES.Com,* March 8, 2013, http://www.forbes.com/sites/rickungar/2013/03/08/james-okeefe-pays-100000-to-acorn-employee-he-smeared-conservative-media-yawns/.
The Republican-led congress continues to hold regular votes to defund ACORN, which hasn't existed since 2010. Ian Urbina, "Acorn on Brink of Bankruptcy, Officials Say," *The New York Times,* March 19, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/20/us/politics/20acorn.html.

177 See, for example, the 2015 controversy over videos claiming to show that Planned Parenthood was selling fetal tissue. Despite over a dozen investigations by states attorneys general finding no violations of the law by Planned Parenthood, it has become an established fact among conservatives. "Planned Parenthood Investigations Find No Fetal Tissue Sales," *NPR.org*, accessed May 9, 2017, http://www.npr.org/2016/01/28/464594826/in-wake-of-videos-planned-parenthood-investigations-find-no-fetal-tissue-sales.

"alternative facts" that has become such an issue as we have become more dependent on the Internet as our source of political information.[178] In this section, I look at how the Tea Party formed in relationship with conservative media. In marking their tribal identity with the name "Tea Party," members of the movement claim to be the authentic people who were denied representation by the Obama presidency. Their authenticity is shown by their fidelity to a set of ideals represented by the founders of the United States as handed down through Ronald Reagan. Before I unpack the narrative that defines the Tea Party, however, we need to detail the truth procedure that supports Tea Party claims of fidelity. Then, I will discuss how the broadcast media of radio/television correspond to this logic of representation and help structure the Tea Party narrative according to fidelity to a mythical past.

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178 A note on the role of Breitbart.com in the 2016 presidential campaign: I started doing research on Andrew Breitbart years ago because of his talent for creating stories that were then repeated on conservative talk radio and Fox News. He was not above using deception to engage in what he saw as a culture war, but he was clear about his purposes and in some ways seemed to have good intentions. He often talked about how his problem was not that the media were biased, but rather that they ostensibly claimed to be objective. He said it would be much more honest for everyone to just admit to their biases, which is fair, except that conservative media also promote the idea that critical thinking means identifying liberal bias and using that as the basis for dismissing the source. After his death, of course, his media empire was taken over by his partner Steve Bannon, who shifted the focus of the website so that it would become the platform of the "Alt-Right." See Sarah Posner, Hannah Levintova, Patrick Caldwell, and Hannah Levintova, "How Donald Trump's Campaign Chief Created An Online Haven For White Nationalists" *Mother Jones*, accessed March 7, 2017, http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2016/08/stephen-bannon-donald-trump-alt-right-breitbart-news. The Alt Right surfaced during the 2016 presidential campaign as a rebranding of white supremacy, although I would argue that the unifying principle of the Alt Right is really patriarchy. I have to think that Andrew Breitbart would have been disgusted by those within the movement who preach racial hierarchy. He focused on issues of race because he said that it was something liberals used to divide people, and seemed to have been motivated by a combination of the Liberal ideal of "colorblindness" and white privilege. In short, I think his focus (like many in the Tea Party) on issues of race was not motivated as much by any theory of white supremacy as it was by the need to disavow the existence of racism or white privilege to maintain the illusion that the white conservative experience is universally representative and therefore true.

Conservative media figures in a traditional broadcast system use the logic of representation I outline below to shape the political perceptions of Tea Partiers. The authority granted these personalities to determine what is true and false makes them a priesthood that helps the Tea Party define their tribal identity. The Tea Party marks its discursive territory through fidelity to a narrative perpetuated by conservative media. Conservative media figures over the past 50 years have established their brands in opposition to liberal media sources that are framed as a threat to the integrity of the conservative ideal of American identity. For the Tea Party, the source of American identity is found in fidelity to an idealized past. The inoculation against liberal media protects the coherence of the narrative against information that may raise doubts about its fidelity to an external reality. In many ways, the crisis of representation faced by the Tea Party is that the territory of their memories is under attack by the liberal media.

The Dogmatic Image of Thought

The crisis of representation that precipitated the Tea Party may be an expression of an anxiety over the universality of perception. Although there are several discourses that feed a narrative in which members of the Tea Party are encouraged to identify their tribe with "The People" whose "common sense" is elevated to absolute truth, I will first detail the underlying logic that serves as a foundation for the populist narrative and how technological developments have reinforced its logic of representation. The truth procedure that supports the Tea Party narrative is illustrated in Plato's "Cave Allegory"

from *The Republic.*[179] Plato's germinal work of political theory from the 4th century B.C.E. is especially relevant to our discussion of truth procedures in democratic society because the ancient Athenians faced a similar problem to our own: in a world where public deliberation (at least among the select few) is the basis for decision-making, what gives speakers their authority? Plato's famous solution to this problem was distrust toward democracy and an appeal to the guidance of "philosopher-kings," whose discernment gives them the right to claim access to universal, absolute truths.

As Platonism has permeated western culture, the idea of the philosopher-king has developed into various kinds of priesthood (in the case of Christianity, literally a clergy) whose authority derives from the logic of representation shown in the Allegory of the Cave. The Cave Allegory describes prisoners who are chained so that the only things they can see are the shadows of objects projected onto the wall by masters above. When one of these prisoners escapes to see the world outside, he is dazzled by the light and returns to the cave to tell the prisoners what he has seen. The prisoners promptly mock him, claiming that their shadows are more real than the outside world the escapee describes. In Plato's explanation of this allegory, he likens the escaped prisoner to the philosopher who can apprehend the true reality of forms through his (or her) reason and the dialectical method. Today we may see "The Cave" as a description of our media environment with the prisoners as viewers, the shadows as screens, and the people projecting the shadows as media figures. One can easily imagine Andrew Breitbart identifying himself as the one who has escaped the tyranny of the liberal media and sees as his mission warning viewers

179 Plato, 208-210.

that they have been seduced into believing that the false images projected by mainstream networks are true representations of reality. For true believers like Breitbart and his colleagues in conservative media, using deception may even be justified as Plato's "noble lie" that helps maintain fidelity to a supposedly higher, transcendent truth.[180]

Gilles Deleuze called the logic by which the fidelity of representations is judged according to an ideal of transcendent truth the "dogmatic image of thought." The critique of representation was central to Deleuze's philosophy and was most fully developed in *Difference and Repetition* but most clearly explained in the epilogue to *Logic of Sense* called "Plato and the Simulacrum."[181] In a continuation of Friedrich Nietzsche's call to "overturn Platonism," Deleuze argues that dialectical thinking (which often finds its simplified expression in "thesis, antithesis, synthesis," wrongly attributed to Hegel) is not about the differences between the terms but rather their relationship to a prior term: "The Platonic dialectic is not a dialectic of contradiction nor of contrariety, but one of rivalry (*amphisbetesis*)--a dialectic of rivals or claimants. Division's essence appears not in breadth - in the determination of the species of a genus - but in depth - in the selection of the lineage: the sorting out of claims, the distinguishing of true claimant from false."[182] The third term in Deleuze's description of the dialectic is not the synthesis, but rather the basis from which this synthesis is judged. These rivals are distinguished by their

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180 In the Republic, Plato has Socrates advocate the "noble lie" as a way the philosopher-kings can keep order in their society. See Plato, 63: "What about a lie in words? Aren't there times when it is useful, and so does not merit hatred? What about when we are dealing with enemies, or with so-called friends who, because of insanity or ignorance, are attempting to do something bad?"

181 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic Of Sense*, Trans. Constantin V Boundas, and Mark Lester (London: Continuum, 2012).

182 Gilles Deleuze, "Plato And The Simulacrum" trans. Rosalind Krauss, *October* 27: 46.

resemblance to a model (The Platonic Ideal), with the goal of trying to represent the model as faithfully as possible.

Deleuze's observation is that in asserting privileged access to the Ideal model from which to judge reality, Plato always relies on a myth (like the Cave Allegory itself) to establish that model.[183] In other words, when he moves from talking about what is true to talking about the criteria for deciding truth, Plato shifts from dialectic to rhetoric. The escaped prisoner does not somehow present the other prisoners with an unmediated experience of reality itself. He *tells them* that their reality is false because he has experienced another reality that is true. How does one know whether the reality outside the cave is more real than the shadows? We must be persuaded that it is. The model is, itself, a representation. As Deleuze explains in *Difference and Repetition:*

> The function of the notion of the model is not to oppose the world of images in its entirety but to select the good images, the icons which resemble from within, and eliminate the bad images or simulacra. Platonism as a whole is erected on the basis of this wish to hunt down the phantasms or simulacra which are identified with the Sophist himself, that devil, that insinuator or simulator, that always disguised and displaced false pretender. For this reason it seems to us that, with Plato, a philosophical decision of the utmost importance was taken: that of the subordinating difference to the supposedly initial power of the Same and the Similar, that of declaring difference unthinkable in itself and sending it, along with the simulacra, back to the bottomless ocean.[184]

If the good images are those that resemble the model, those who create the myths that establish the models serve as a priesthood with the power to distinguish the true from the

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183 My use of the term "myth" is consistent with Paul Patton's English translation of Deleuze's French term "mythe," which is the word he uses rather than Plato's original Greek *mythoi*.

184 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 46.

false.[185] In the version of the Cave Allegory updated by Nietzsche and Deleuze, one does not simply walk out of the cave and directly apprehend total, absolute, reality. This is not because, as some would have it, there is no real world and all we have are representations, but rather that there is too much real world to ever be contained in our representations. In appealing to this critique I know that I risk being interpreted as arguing that representations are bad because they fail to have absolute fidelity to reality, but that interpretation privileges identity over difference. The point is that all representations are partial and it is the tendency to identify our perception or concept of the world with the totality of the world that is a mistake. When it comes to political media, there is no way that a news program could give a total accounting of all the events of the day, or all the possible interpretations of those events. The question is not "are you in the cave or have you escaped?" The question is "which cave are you in?"

The logic of representation may promote a tendency to see one's own perspective (cave) as universal (real) by giving groups a basis for defining "common sense." A liberal critic of Breitbart and his colleagues in the conservative media might point out that rather than lead others to escape the cave, they have simply created a new cave and urged their viewers to see it as the "true" representation of reality. Part of the appeal of partisan media is that they help audiences form a tribal identity around this claim to truth. Social scientists over the past few years have built an impressive body of evidence that partisan selective exposure and confirmation bias have created a media environment in which we

185 Michel Foucault's project was the analysis of this relationship between knowledge (what counts as true) and power.

are sorted according to the type of tribal identification I am discussing;[186] my analysis of the logic behind that sorting may shed light on the rhetorical basis of this sorting. In Plato's telling of the Cave, the prisoners mock the escapee who has been blinded by his experience of a world outside the cave because his description of reality is different from the shadows they see as the totality of the world. Anyone who has had an argument with an ardent adherent to Fox News or conservative talk radio has probably had the experience of being told that they are just repeating "Democrat (sic) propaganda" or that they are fooled by the biased media. As I will show in the analysis of the Tea Party narrative, the claim to truth is the basis of the Tea Party's identification against enemies they see as attacking that truth. The dogmatic image of thought helps reaffirm this identity by promoting fidelity to a model as determining the validity of a perspective.

Contemporary Conservative Media and the Dogmatic Image of Thought

Breitbart's models came from the world of conservative radio and television. These technologies may perpetuate the dogmatic image of thought because of their centralization as broadcast media. According to Harold Innis, "radio appealed to vast areas, overcame the division between classes in its escape from literacy, and favoured centralization and bureaucracy."[187] As a one-to-many form of communication, these broadcast media have the effect of contracting the range of possible perspectives:

> If any large part of the population listens, each station must have thousands of listeners. The number of points of view which can be presented is limited by the

186 See, for example: Natalie Jomini Stroud, *Niche News: The Politics of News Choice*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

187 Ennis, *The Bias of Communication*, 82.

> number of stations available. The fact that each programme must appeal to thousands of listeners limits still more the range of ideas which can be presented. Radio programmes can only deal in lowest common intellectual denominators since only a few people have the necessary background of knowledge for understanding any one complex idea or any single piece of information.[188]

Television shares this technological limitation, initially because of the range of frequencies for transmission but now because of the licensing structure with cable companies and cost of production.

The limitation of channels makes fidelity an important concern as producers try to strengthen their signal to overcome the noise, which imposes a requirement for the simplification of political discourse. D.Q. Innis makes this point in the appendix to *The Bias of Communication* in a passage that is worth considering at length:

> With only a few radio and television stations thousands must listen to each station and progress must be based on the few simple ideas which large groups of people have in common. The immediacy of radio has been used effectively in politics for uncomplicated nationalistic appeals. That national leaders have remained in power for unusual lengths of time is a fact not unrelated to the use of radio. Personal magnetism reflected over national networks has produced tendencies toward centralized control, the importance of which cannot be fully assessed. Television has an even more direct impact on the audience.[189]

At the same time as radio and television contract the range of possible perspectives they can broadcast, for content producers in these media to compete they must attempt to appeal to the largest audience. In other words, the broadcast structure takes particular perspectives and tries to universalize them as part of the nature of the technology. Television and radio give audiences shared experiences that may help to create a sense of community based on commonality of perception.

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188 D. Q. Innis, 200.
189 D.Q. Innis, 202.

Broadcast media are a means through which we may experience distant political events, but this erasure of the limitations of space also affects our perception of time because television and radio are inherently temporal media. Print media are physical objects that we interact with in space, and to an extent the Internet tries to simulate this spatial relationship (the desktop metaphor, "surfing," Cyberspace), but we *listen* to broadcast content and so experience it chronologically. Traditionally, media critics have seen television as a technology that contracts the past and future into a constant present. Innis argues that broadcast media shaped our relationship to existing print media and "[w]ith these powerful developments time was destroyed and it became increasingly difficult to achieve continuity or to ask for a consideration of the future."[190] According to Innis, the inability of broadcast media to convey complex information makes it harder to think about the past or future. Neil Postman makes a similar critique: "But television is a speed-of-light medium, a present-centered medium. Its grammar, so to say, permits no access to the past. Everything presented in moving pictures is experienced as happening 'now,' which is why we must be told in language that a videotape we are seeing was made months before."[191] On the other hand, Amy Holdsworth argues that television may supplement its erasure of the past by serving as a kind of sensual substitute for memory.

Television engages sight and hearing, the dominant senses for humans and the ones we typically evoke when thinking about the past. Holdsworth argues that "if television can be considered a 'process' likened to the experience of subjective memory

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190 Innis, 83.

191 Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves To Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, (New York: Penguin, 2005), 136.

and the complicated dynamics of remembering and forgetting, we might see how the ebb and flow of television takes on the character of the 'memory text.'"[192] Holdsworth argues that as a "memory text," television can trigger intense nostalgia as programs recall past events. The prevalence of television in our lives in the late 20th century links many of our memories to the screen (Kennedy assassination, moon landing, 9/11, for example). The conventions of television reinforce its ability to replicate memory with the ubiquity of reruns, retrospective shows, and news-oriented programming in which it is common to see some past statement of a politician or event replayed so that the pundits can offer their comment on it.[193] If we take Holdsworth's argument seriously that television has become an archive of collective memory, then we have to ask who are the curators of political memory that help audiences constitute competing communities or tribes.

Another feature of television and radio is the authority granted to the personalities that produce content. As many critics of television have observed, these network media are one-way forms of communication.[194] Postman argues that because television lacks the interactivity required for education, it is unsuitable for promoting detailed understanding of information. The competition for viewers makes ethos especially important for broadcast sources, as Postman says:

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192 Amy Holdsworth, "Televisual Memory." *Screen* 51 (2): 129-142.

193 Sean Hannity on Fox News has distilled this convention of interpretation down to just playing a clip and asking a guest for their reaction. It is as predictable as Chuck Todd saying "let me ask you this" before almost every question.

194 It is tangental to my project so I do not wish to engage the argument in detail here, but the common criticism is that television renders its audience as passive observers. Scientific research that debunks this assumption aside, as rhetorical scholars we should know better because we understand how enthymemes work.

> Stated in its simplest form, it is that television provides a new (or, possibly, restores an old) definition of truth: The credibility of the teller is the ultimate test of the truth of a proposition. "Credibility" here does not refer to the past record of the teller for making statements that have survived the rigors of reality-testing. It refers only to the impression of sincerity, authenticity, vulnerability, or attractiveness (choose one or more) conveyed by the actor/reporter.[195]

Postman's observation that the traditional news media rely on the credibility of anchors to insure the validity of the information they provide leads us to the conclusion that in a competitive partisan news environment, there is a strong incentive to discredit the opposition. Discrediting disconfirming information helps reinforce the coherence of the tribal narrative. In the next section, we will unpack the narrative that the Tea Party uses as an interpretive frame, but first I want to summarize what we've discussed so far.

The contemporary media environment has multiplied the possible sources of authoritative information that audiences can use to shape their political perceptions. For most people, the experience of federal U.S. politics is through the media. The media has a privileged place in our system of government because the First Amendment to the Constitution guarantees a free press as a check on government power and means for the people to exert their right to free expression. The Constitution also sets up a representative government so the information the press provides the public plays an important role in deciding who will represent us. Plato's Cave Allegory expresses the common understanding of representation as shadows projected on a cave wall that can be judged according to their fidelity to an external reality. Gilles Deleuze, following Nietzsche, points out that the fantasy of escaping representation to achieve an unmediated

195 Postman, 101-102.

perception of reality is also itself an illusion. That is, we directly experience reality all the time but our interpretation of that experience is always, already mediated because of our dependence on language to understand and communicate that experience.[196] Deleuze's critique of the dogmatic image of Thought is that traditional philosophy gives us a framework for deciding the fidelity of representations according to their similarity to a model that is itself a representation. We are all in caves, so to speak, so our judgment of the truth of representations depends on our concept of what the shadows are supposed to be representing.

Competition between media outlets makes media figures into a priesthood that helps to constitute political tribes according to their adherence to a common sense of reality. The broadcast technologies of television and radio provide this priesthood with a means of production for both representations and the ideas that we judge those representations by, centralizing authority according to the credibility of these personalities. If social movements arise as a response to perceived problems in our political reality, as Leland Griffin argues, and populist movements are triggered by a crisis of representation, then hegemonic struggle between tribes includes conflict in the territory of the media. Conservative media figures like Andrew Breitbart are not wrong in thinking that their hegemony is threatened by the tendency for journalists and academics to be more on the left end of the political spectrum, except insofar as these partisans seem to assume that rather than adapt to new information it is normal to engage in deception to

196 The distinction here is similar to the difference between hearing and listening that we teach in the basic communication course. Hearing is the immediate experience but listening involves awareness, attention, and understanding.

affirm one's truth as universal. If Harold Innis is right and the dominant media of a culture shape its perception of time and space, it may help explain how the textually-based world of academics and mainstream journalists differs so greatly from the alternative world of the radio- and television-based conservative information environment. As broadcast media contract our perception of time into a perpetual present, the reliance on credibility of broadcasters gives them authority over an archive of memories. As we are about to see, the archive of memories presented by conservative media create the model of a virtual past to which the Tea Party claims we owe fidelity.

ANALYSIS: THE TEA PARTY NARRATIVE

> The myth, with its constantly circular structure, is really the narrative of a foundation. It allows the construction of a model according to which different claimants can be judged.
>
> –Gilles Deleuze, "Plato and the Simulacrum"[197]

In 2009, artist Jon McNaughton achieved national fame and new financial success with his paintings that combine religious and patriotic themes when Tea Party groups began promoting his work.[198] His paintings use a style vaguely reminiscent of Norman Rockwell to depict an America divided into good and evil, often by producing contrasting images with parallel titles including "One Nation Under God" vs "One Nation Under

197 Deleuze, 46.

198 I arrived at my analysis of his work independently, but political scientists Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson mention McNaughton's paintings as an expression of the Tea Party view of the Constitution in a discussion that resonates with my own. See: Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 52.

Socialism," and "The Forgotten Man" vs "The Empowered Man."[199] His paintings feature heroic images of Ronald Reagan, Andrew Breitbart, and ordinary Americans raising flags (sometimes with a gun in the other hand). Obama is the subject of many of the paintings. In "The Forgotten Man," he stands with his back turned to the previous presidents who plead with him to intervene on behalf of a dejected-looking man sitting on a park bench nearby, but Obama just stands there defiantly with one foot on the Constitution.[200] The contrasting image, "The Empowered Man," shows Obama backing away like a vampire confronted with a cross when the man picks up the Constitution. Others include Obama fiddling while Washington burns ("The Demise of America"), giving a speech to a crowd of chained citizens while money rains down on him ("Wake Up America"), and burning a copy of the Constitution ("One Nation Under Socialism"). The companion piece to the latter painting is worth a closer look.

Like many of his paintings, the setting for "One Nation Under God" is Washington D.C.[201] At the center of the painting stands Jesus holding a copy of the Constitution. Behind him stand various soldiers, Founding Fathers, and presidents Abraham Lincoln and Ronald Reagan. In front of him are two groups. On one side, kneeling reverently, are a mother with her child, an immigrant, a marine and several others who are contrasted with those on the left hand of Christ including a college

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199 Jon McNaughton, "Patriotic - Page 1 - Mcnaughton Fine Art," Jonmcnaughton.com, http://jonmcnaughton.com/patriotic/.

200 Jon McNaughton, "The Forgotten Man 10 X 15 OE - Litho Print." *Mcnaughton Fine Art*, accessed March 29, 2017. http://jonmcnaughton.com/litho-canvas-the-forgotten-man-10-x-15-oe/.

201 Jon McNaughton, "Patriotic - Americana - One Nation Under God - Mcnaughton Fine Art." Jonmcnaughton.com, accessed March 29, 2017. http://jonmcnaughton.com/patriotic/americana/new-category/.

professor (uh oh), journalist, Supreme Court justice, and Satan. Interestingly, one of the few African-American figures in all of McNaughton's paintings (other than Obama) is on the right-hand side of Christ holding a copy of *The Five Thousand Year Leap* by W. Cleon Skousen.[202] This detail is significant because it offers a clue to the artist's message.[203] Skousen was one in a line of revisionist historians writing the past from a conservative interpretation.[204] In Skousen's case, it is a history inspired by Dispensationalism.

Dispensationalism is a broad category of Biblical interpretation that involves reading history as fulfillment of prophecy.[205] There are several versions, but as Dispensationalism has been taken up by popular televangelists and novelists, a major emphasis has become looking at current events as proof we are nearing the Apocalypse. These terms are somewhat controversial, but Skousen's particular form of Dispensationalism has strong elements of Dominionism. According to Michael McVicar, "Dominionism" is a label critics use to describe a version of Christian Reconstructionism in which Christians are called to take control of government to establish God's kingdom

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202 W. Skousen, *The Five Thousand Year Leap: The 28 Great Ideas that are Changing the World*, (The National Center for Constitutional Studies, 1985).

203 The damned college professor holds a copy of Darwin's *Origin of Species*.

204 The most familiar forms of this are probably the attempts to rewrite the history of the Civil War to be about "state's rights" rather than slavery, or applying the contemporary party ideological alignment to say that because the founders of the Ku Klux Klan were Democrats, that means they were liberals. The most mind-blowing thing I learned during this research is that there is a whole literature that argues that Hitler was a liberal.

205 Paul S. Boyer, "Dispensationalism." *Encyclopedia of Religion in America*, ed. Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams, (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010), 564-569.

on Earth.[206] From this point of view, because democracy gives believers and non-believers equal influence, it is incompatible with God's plan and the current U.S. system is just a stage on the way to a Christian republic. Skousen's argument provides an elaboration of this idea: The Constitution was divinely-inspired to guide God's chosen people to take power to prepare for the second coming of Christ. As a member of the John Birch Society and believer in New World Order conspiracies, Skousen argued that communism and socialism were tools of Satan to establish the one-world government of the Antichrist that stands against the true expression of God's will in the free market. Clearly, few Tea Party activists would explicitly share this theological interpretation, but its popularity with Glenn Beck, Michelle Bachmann, and other influencers within the movement may help explain how its logic resonates in the political milieu.

If we return to McNaughton's "One Nation Under God" painting, I think we can see the model used by the Tea Party's logic of representation. When I first saw this picture, what struck me as someone who grew up in the (Antiochian) Greek Orthodox church was that it looks like an icon.[207] In traditional iconography, Christ is often shown holding scripture.[208] McNaughton's version, on the other hand, features Christ holding the U.S. Constitution, creating a metaphoric relationship between scripture and the Constitution in which they share divine inspiration. This metaphor is reinforced by the

206 Michael J. McVicar. "'Let them have Dominion': 'Dominion Theology' and the Construction of Religious Extremism in the US Media," *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 25, no. 1 (2013): 120-145.

207 The Greek word icon (εικών) is translated as "image" and is the word that Deleuze uses to refer to the "true copy" in Plato's logic of representation. I think McNaughton's use of religious imagery, combined with my analysis, shows that this is the "Image of thought" at work in the Tea Party narrative.

208 See https://www.monasteryicons.com/product/christ-the-teacher-icon-550/icons-of-christ for an example.

title of this and its companion painting: “One Nation Under God” vs “One Nation Under Socialism.” By setting God in opposition to socialism the implication is that socialism is evil therefore the alternative (capitalism) must be divine. The implication that the Constitution is divinely inspired (which McNaughton and others in the movement are explicit about at times) elevates the Constitution’s authority from an expression of the people to an infallible means by which “The People” can be discerned.

As my analysis will show, this substitution forms the image of thought that the Tea Party uses as a ground for their narrative. In the circular structure of this myth, the Tea Party makes a metonymic claim to the title of “We the People” by making the argument that their interpretation of the Constitution is the most faithful. If one believes that the Constitution derives its authority from God, and the true people are those who share a certain interpretation of the Constitution, then the tendency to see those who do not share this interpretation as evil makes a bit more sense. Of course, it is no revelation that the Tea Party calls for a return to the Constitution. In fact, like many conservatives, one of their grievances is against what they call “activist judges” whose interpretations of the Constitution as a “living document” are opposed to the Constructionist model (espoused by the late Antonin Scalia) in which the intention of the founders is the deciding factor.[209] What is important here is that the metaphoric relationship between the Constitution and scripture creates a structure of interpretive authority much like that which exists in various Christian denominations. Again, in the logic of representation at

[209] See, for example, a declaration by Tea Party Express upon the nomination of Elena Kagan to the Supreme Court: "Exclusive: Tea Party Federation Draft 'Guide' On Kagan Nomination," *CNN.com*, May 11, 2010, http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2010/05/11/tea-party-groups-plot-their-course-on-kagan-nomination/?fbid=Ghz9vXHPtpE.

work within the Tea Party it is fidelity to their idea of the Constitution that is basis for the coherence of the narrative. For the Tea Party, Fox News, talk radio, and websites like Breitbart.com serve as a priesthood who provide their audiences with an interpretation of the Constitution while also shaping their perception of current events according to that interpretation.

The basic version of the Tea Party narrative is that America has strayed from the Constitution and the Tea Party must take power back to restore fidelity to the Founders. Of course, individual members of the Tea Party each have their own stories and they may not all take their cues from the conservative media but this claim to fidelity to the Constitution is at the core of Tea Party identity. Previously I have discussed populist rhetoric according to five criteria. The basic populist formula involves a (1) crisis in which (2) the People must claim (4) territory from (3) the enemy through a (5) call to confrontation. My introductory analysis of McNaughton's paintings serves as a vivid illustration of this hegemonic struggle between the true people and their enemies. Next, we can analyze how the Tea Party narrative uses populist rhetoric to justify their claim to be the true people. I present the elements of the narrative in three parts. First, the Tea Party makes sense out of the economic crisis by placing blame on the government. Second, the Tea Party defines itself as the "true people" by conjuring Ronald Reagan against their enemies as embodied in Barack Obama. Finally, I conclude this chapter by discussing how Tea Party makes a claim to the virtual territory of the past through confrontation with the media, and so their conjuring of Ronald Reagan is haunted by the paranoid specter of Richard Nixon.

The Crisis: The Market Versus the Government

During the campaign of 2008 the mortgage crisis that had started the previous year began affecting the rest of the economy as the failure of mortgage companies trigged the collapse of investment banks that had bundled mortgages into various securities instruments.[210] In turn, the entire financial system seemed at risk as the effects rippled out and hit AIG, which had insured these banks against their bad investments. If AIG fell, financial experts said, there was a risk it would affect the solvency of major banks like Goldman Sachs. The Federal Reserve and the Treasury Department arranged for some of the affected companies to be bought by other banks while allowing others to go bankrupt, most notably Lehman Brothers. Congress and then-president George W. Bush took action as well by passing a series of bailouts and stimulus bills to try to mitigate the effects of the economic collapse. Senator John McCain, who was the Republican nominee for president against Barack Obama, suspended his campaign to return to Washington and, according to Andrew Ross Sorkin's book *Too Big to Fail*, his intervention into the talks between Wall Street and Treasury actually made the situation worse by initially scaring Wall Street away from making a deal. The country was on the verge of another Great Depression, according to these officials, and it was necessary for the government to act to save capitalism from itself.

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210 The causes of the economic crisis are complex, and economics is not my area of expertise. It is not my purpose here to litigate the crisis so I am offering a simplified version of the event so I can move on to discussing the narrative about the event. I should say, though, that my understanding is informed by Michael Lewis, *The Big Short*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), which was made into a 2015 film directed by Adam McKay; and Andrew Ross Sorkin, Ross Sorkin, Andrew, *Too Big to Fail*, (New York: Viking Adult: 2009), which was made into an HBO movie in 2011.

The Tea Party's narrative serves to save faith in capitalism from the reality of the economic crisis by promoting a dialectical vision in which "the market" is the true representation of the Constitution in opposition to the very government that the Constitution set the guidelines for. Barack Obama's election, and his promise that government can help correct the flaws in capitalism through Wall Street regulations and additional stimulus plans triggered the shift from economic crisis to crisis of representation for members of the Tea Party who advocated the free market as the best way of solving society's problems. The threat is best summarized in the *Newsweek* magazine cover story from February 6, 2009 by Jon Meacham: "We are All Socialists Now."[211] The Tea Party grew from the call to fight against what they saw as increased government control leading to socialism, which is a term often used interchangeably with communism in their rhetoric. For many members of the Tea Party, whose lifespan coincides with the Cold War, fear of socialism may have trigged old anxieties. As Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky argue, anti-communism was one of the driving forces in the media during the Cold War:

> The anti-Communist control mechanism reaches through the system to exercise a profound influence on the mass media. In normal times as well as in periods of Red scares, issues tend to be framed in terms of a dichotomized world of Communist and anti-Communist powers, with gains and losses allocated to contesting sides, and rooting for 'our side' considered an entirely legitimate news practice.[212]

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211 Jon Meacham, "We Are All Socialists Now," *Newsweek*, http://www.newsweek.com/we-are-all-socialists-now-82577.

212 Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2003), 30.

In addition to the media framing of Communism as the enemy, the U.S. Defense Department and various corporations sponsored production of a series of anti-Communist propaganda films that were shown in schools during the 1950s and 1960s, fueled by the need to prepare for the possibility of nuclear war. Of course, one of the most extreme and widely discussed manifestations of this Red Scare was the John Birch Society.

The anti-Communist rhetoric of the Birch Society seems to have some resonance with the Tea Party. Rhetorical scholarship has a well-established history in studying the John Birch Society, which was a group founded during the height of McCarthyism dedicated to ridding American society of supposed Communist infiltration. In Edwin Black's germinal piece on the Second Persona, he analyzes the use of the metaphor "the cancer of communism" as a way of interrogating the ideology of the audience.[213] As Celeste Condit observes, Black overlooked a developed discussion of pathos as key to understanding the ideology of the Birch Society, and misses the important point that the metaphor in their rhetoric was the more broad "cancer of collectivism."[214] Finally, Charles J. Stewart argues that this focus on "collectivism" as the danger facing America helped the John Birch Society mutate after the end of the Cold War, modifying its rhetoric toward belief in a New World Order conspiracy that acts as a kind of catch-all for any type of danger that government, especially on a global scale, might pose to

213 Edwin Black, ''The Second Persona,'' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56 (1970): 109-19.

214 Celeste M. Condit, "Pathos In Criticism: Edwin Black's Communism-As-Cancer Metaphor," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99 (1): 1-26.

individuals.[215] With the exception of Glenn Beck, most of the major conservative media figures stay away from explicitly using the rhetoric of conspiracy theories, but distrust toward government and collectivism in general (except corporations) are common themes across right wing media. Stripped down to its core themes, the rhetoric of the John Birch society presents a precursor to the Tea Party rhetoric warning against government takeover.

Although it would be unfair to paint the Tea Party as a modern-day version of the John Birch society, it may be relevant that major financial support for the organizations that helped train Tea Party organizers came from Charles and David Koch, whose father was one of the founders of the John Birch Society.[216] Sons are not their fathers, and they have drifted away from any formal ties with the group, but according to *Politico* the John Birch Society had an influence on the Koch Brothers' early ideological development. It is not that the Koch Brothers control the organizations they fund, but that they are more likely to fund political organizations that promote their beliefs. Critics often pointed to the Koch Brothers as proof that the Tea Party was an "astroturf" movement rather than one made up of grassroots citizens, but this is a false dichotomy: the groups funded by the Kochs and others, including members, helped train the grassroots activists and spread messaging that took elements from various conservative discourses, especially the anti-government narrative exemplified by the John Birch Society.

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215 Charles J. Stewart, "The Master Conspiracy of The John Birch Society: From Communism To The New World Order," *Western Journal of Communication* 66 (4): 423-447.

216 Michael Grunweld and Michael Crowley 2017. "The Secrets Of Charles Koch'S Political Ascent," *POLITICO Magazine*, http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/01/charles-koch-political-ascent-jane-mayer-213541.

The Tea Party was more than just a series of protests that got media attention. As *New York Times* correspondent Kate Zernike observes, various Tea Party organizations held trainings around the country in which they borrowed tactics from the Left to organize the movement for an intervention in the 2010 election.[217] These meetings helped members connect with one another, learn how to assemble protests and organize for the election, and served as a kind of classroom in which the Tea Party narrative spread. One example of narrating the crisis comes from John Allison, a business professor at Wake Forest and former bank CEO who gave talks to various Tea Party groups and had a coherent explanation of the financial crisis that resonated with the stories told by conservative talk radio and television hosts like Neil Cavuto. Perhaps the best summary of the Tea Party narrative about the Financial Crisis is found in the blurb by Charles Koch on the cover of Allison's book *The Financial Crisis and the Free Market Cure:* "Shows how our economic crisis was a failure, not of the free market, but of government."[218] Allison makes the argument in his speech to the Harvard Law School on September 14, 2011: "The Financial Crisis was primarily caused by government policy. We do not live in a free market in the United States."[219] He makes the claim that the financial industry is the most regulated in the country, and this regulation is why it failed. Allison argues that by printing money, insuring deposits through the FDIC program, and

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217 Kate Zernike, *Boiling Mad*, (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2011).
Freedomworks is a professional organizing group that precedes the Tea Party movement, but took the lead in training activists to set up their own Tea Party organizations that would in-turn train organizers.

218 See John A. Allison, *The Financial Crisis and The Market Cure*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013).

219 John A. Allison, "2008 Financial Crisis Causes Consequences," *CSPAN.org,* September 14, 2011, https://www.c-span.org/video/?301535-1/2008-financial-crisis-causes-consequences.

encouraging loans to low-income borrowers, the government inflated an unsustainable housing market. Part of the appeal of this kind of argument is that some of these factors did in fact contribute to the crisis, but it leaves out the aspects that might shake faith in the infallibility of capitalism or the good will of the wealthy. There is little or no discussion of the complexities of financial markets, credit-default swaps, or widespread fraud unchecked by the deregulation of the Bush administration or repeal of Glass-Steagall when Bill Clinton was president. Instead, much of the explanation relies on an appeal to abstract principles that substitutes a form of common sense for causal argument.

Allison appeals to principles that are well known as the inspiration for our founding documents in his speech to the Harvard Tea Party group. After about a half hour discussing the financial crisis from a fairly libertarian perspective, Allison moves into a discussion of the crisis of representation by framing the issue as a philosophical failure. He argues that we have lost fidelity to the foundational principles of the United States: "This is really not an economic crisis, it is really a philosophical crisis. The real cause of the financial crisis is a combination of altruism and pragmatism."[220] He offers medical care as an example of the failure of altruism, "my right to free medical care is my right to imprison the doctor to provide me with that medical care." He claims this principle overturns "the American concept of rights" in which "you have to right to what you produce" not what others produce. This argument relies on the assumption that medical care is a commodity like any other commodity that can be traded on the market

220 Allison, 2011.

for the best price to produce a profit (exchange value) rather than, for example, as a service that is judged by its social value or use value.

Pragmatism, as Allison defines it, is "do what works," which he says is taught in business schools and requires a short-term view that prevents "integrity" to higher principles.[221] He blames the combination of altruism and pragmatism for creating the social welfare system he calls "the free lunch mentality." Allison argues that the expectation that we are entitled to the basics that support our right to life leads to "[t]he lack of personal responsibility [that] is the death of democracy." He says that "the founding fathers talked about the tyranny of the majority," (actually, Alexis De Tocqueville) and he ties this to the idea, made famous by Mitt Romney's forty-seven percent comment, that this failure to be faithful to our founding principles produces a society divided into "takers" and "makers." Interestingly, in his appeal to the founding principles, Allison conflates the Declaration of Independence with the Constitution, often claiming to appeal to the Constitution when the quotations he is referencing derive from the Declaration of Independence.

The tendency to claim fidelity to the Constitution while appealing to the Declaration of Independence may indicate a certain distrust of the Constitution as the document that establishes the federal government, and a desire to return to a system more akin to that established under the Articles of Confederation. After all, one of the purposes of the government announced in the preamble is to "establish the general welfare" and this may indicate the need for government intervention in the economy. If the problem is

221 Allison, 2011.

that government has attempted to usurp the rightful role of the market in providing for the common good, Allison tells his Tea Party audience that "[t]he cure is the principles that made America great in the first place."[222] Allison claims that the most important of these principles is the right to the pursuit of happiness that can only be faithfully executed by the market: "The United States was the first country founded on the idea that people should act in their rational self-interest, properly understood." Predictably, within 30 seconds of this statement he says his favorite book is *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand and suggests that the members of his audience at the Harvard Law School Tea Party read it, thereby showing that the "proper understanding" of the Enlightenment principles that inspired the Constitution is actually to be found in 20th century capitalist propaganda. Allison's argument is just one example of the Tea Party claim that the economic crisis was the result of government interference and so the exigence to which the Tea Party responds is the need to restore the market as the means through which we may fulfill the promise of the Constitution. That is, we can only manifest the ideals of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness as *homo economicus*.

The tendency to see humans as primarily economic animals is at the heart of the system that has come to be called "neoliberalism." As we saw in the first chapter of this study, Wendy Brown sees neoliberalism as an appeal to the market as the dominant logic through which society should be structured, resulting in the widespread privatization of once public services and resources. In her book *Undoing the Demos*, Brown discusses how the logic of economics has infiltrated political life to the point that the market is seen

222 Allison, 2011.

both as the model for political agency and for discerning truth.[223] This is a problem, as Brown maintains, in part because it interpellates political subjects as market actors in competition with one another and makes self-interest rather than any type of social conscience the ultimate morality. As she says, "The replacement of citizenship defined as concern with the public good by citizenship reduced to the citizen as homo oecnomicus also eliminates the very idea of a people, a demos asserting its collective political sovereignty."[224] Rather than see citizenship as public duty in which individuals may make sacrifices for the social order, citizenship is placed in a logic of competition in which our sacrifice is for the maintenance of the economic order. The call to "take America back" sets up the Tea Party in competition with the majority of voters who elected the government the Tea Party claims is a false representative.

The competition between the Tea Party and other voters over the mantle of "the people" is an extension of the competition between conservative media and others over the truth. Much of Brown's analysis of neoliberalism involves a critique and development of the theorizing that Michel Foucault did in the last years of his life. One of the key elements of neoliberalism, according to Foucault, was that the market becomes the arbiter of truth. As Brown says, "with neoliberalism the market becomes *the*, rather than *a* site of veridiction *and* becomes so for every arena and type of human activity."[225] That is, the market establishes and disseminates truths while setting the procedures by which truth

223 Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015).
224 Brown, 39.
225 Brown, 67.

can be discerned. This logic can be seen in the "Contract From America," a web-based document created by members of the Tea Party as a list of demands that candidates asking for their endorsement must sign.[226] Among the principles enshrined in this document are multiple explicit mentions of freedom as a matter of economic choice. For example: "Our moral, political, and economic liberties are inherent, not granted by our government. It is essential to the practice of these liberties that we be free from restriction over our peaceful political expression and free from excessive control over our economic choices."[227] Many of the demands may as well have been written by a corporation, because for some reason among the primary concerns for this supposedly anti-tax movement are the ending of EPA regulations and the overturning of the Affordable Care Act. The process for developing this document followed these market norms by having members submit ideas that were then vetted by a corporate board that included former Freedomworks president Dick Armey who then presented them back to the membership as a marketing plan for Tea Party candidates. During the subsequent congressional elections, even Republican candidates who did not meet the criteria of purity established by the Tea Party were defeated.[228] Just as the publicity for the Fox News channel often

226 "Contract from America," accessed April 8, 2017, http://contractfromamerica.org/.

227 "Contract from America."

228 Not all Tea Party candidates who defeated other Republicans for nomination were successful. Perhaps most famously, Christine O'Donnell's third senate run in Delaware resulted in defeat after revelations that in high school she was (not) a witch. See "Christine O'Donnell – 'I'm Not a Witch. I'm You,'" n.d. *Youtube.com,* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ek3OUay2uWw.
Presumably, she lost because her support among the Tea Party was not enough to carry the general election and not because of losing Tea Party support over questions about her religious affiliation, which would be inconsistent with the Constitution's clause forbidding a religious test for public office.

links its ratings to its credibility, the Tea Party's claim to representation is granted truth value by defeating its competitors in the market of politics.[229]

The narrative that unites members of the Tea Party is one in which the financial crisis of 2008 was the result of a struggle between the free market and the government, and only by properly subsuming political power under economic power can their freedom be reclaimed. In this rhetoric, the government is always the enemy, so that when discussing the Constitution there is a wall between Preamble of "We the People" and the Articles that establish the Federal Government. The amendments are questionable, except the first, second, and tenth. By setting up government in opposition to the free market, Tea Party rhetoric constructs a model of representation in which true freedom is only found in consumer choices, with political activity being just one of these choices. If, as Adam Smith said, the market is guided by the invisible hand (of God), then Tea Party becomes the chosen people called upon to restore our faith with the Constitution by returning power to the market.[230] In the next section, I discuss how the people are discerned from their enemy through their fidelity to an interpretation of the Constitution

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229 See, for example: "FOX NEWS CHANNEL MARKS DECADE AS THE NUMBER ONE CABLE NEWS NETWORK," *Fox News*, accessed May 9, 2017. http://press.foxnews.com/2012/01/fox-news-channel-marks-decade-as-the-number-one-cable-news-network/.

230 Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations,* ed. Edwin Cannan, (New York: Modern Library, 1994); Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* (Economic Classics, 2013).
Smith did not explicitly say that the invisible hand that guides the market is the hand of God in *The Wealth of Nations*, but he had earlier used the expression "invisible hand" in reference to Providence in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*.
Paul Oslington explains the connection between Smith's formulation of capitalism and his Calvinism in Paul Oslington, "God and the Market: Adam Smith's Invisible Hand," *Journal of Business Ethics* 108, no. 4 (2012): 429-38.

that is seen as divinely-inspired. The narrative of the Tea Party is that we are in, yet again, a "time for choosing."

The People and the Enemy: Reagan Versus Obama

The Tea Party did not need a leader because they had Ronald Reagan. Starting from humble roots, Reagan began his career as a radio broadcaster before moving to Hollywood where he was more successful as president of the Screen Actor's Guild (SAG) than he had been as an actor. It was in that role that Reagan began his shift from a fairly typical Hollywood liberal Democrat to the stalwart of the conservative movement that he became. After having served his country during World War II making films to support the effort (he tried to enlist for active duty but was rejected because of poor eyesight), Reagan was once again called to his country's service during the Red Scares of the late 1940s and 1950s. According to Rick Perlstein, whose biography *The Invisible Bridge* traces the links between Nixon and Reagan, the FBI met with Reagan several times during these years to gather information on communists in Hollywood.[231] After he became head of SAG, Reagan played an important role in the (in)famous blacklist that barred suspected communists from getting work, including his testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). While remaining a Democrat in name, Reagan got the attention of Richard Nixon campaigning for Dwight Eisenhower in 1952 as a particularly effective speaker against taxes and the New Deal. Reagan's real ideological conversion came during his time as host of *General Electric Theater.*

231 Rick Perlstein, *The Invisible Bridge: The Fall of Nixon and the Rise of Reagan*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

For academics who may cultivate a guard against accusations of using the classroom to inculcate ideological conformity, it might be strange to remember (or find out) that during the mid 20th-century some major corporations had assigned reading lists for their employees that included the greatest hits from Austrian economist F.A. Hayek and other texts that would become the canon of conservative and libertarian thought. As Perlstein explains, GE was on the cutting edge of this trend thanks to its vice president for labor relations Lemuel Boulware, who used new tools of social science, marketing, and public relations to develop an educational program for employees: "His goal was to teach them to identify their most intimate interests with the well-being of the company—and their company's with the well-being of the free world itself. In other words, to turn millions of Americans into right-wing conservatives."[232] As a former liberal and television star already employed by General Electric, Reagan was a natural for the role of spokesperson in this campaign. He went around the country visiting GE facilities and giving talks promoting the conservative company line. Later, he would take these skills to become the prototype for conservative talk radio, hosting shows before and after his time as Governor of California, and again after his unsuccessful campaign for president in 1976.

It may be that Reagan's role as one of the early figures in the conservative media infrastructure is just as important as his presidency when it comes to the development of the Tea Party. Of course, there are the usual reasons that Tea Party activists might identify with Reagan including his policies and, importantly, his strong stance against

232 Perlstein, 389.

Communism. I would also point out that for most members of the Tea Party, the memory of the Reagan years as a time of prosperity may be because for many of them these were their peak earnings years. Most of them would have been in their 30s and 40s during this time, and their children probably hadn't gotten to the point where big expenses like car insurance and college tuition would factor into the budget. But as a pioneer in conservative media, Reagan provided a vision of an information infrastructure that served as an alternative to the expertise of journalists and academics.

One of the hallmarks of Reagan's style was the use of statistics and anecdotes to weave his arguments into an appeal to "common sense" that is probably most echoed in Rush Limbaugh, whose radio show primarily consists of reading news stories from various sources and offering commentary. Perhaps most significantly, Reagan promoted his own ethical perspective that John Dean says in *Conservatives without Conscience* was shared by Nixon and has since become ubiquitous in the conservative movement: the world can be divided into good people and bad people, and everything good people do is just by its very nature because they are like us, while everything done by people who are not us is suspicious.[233] Perlstein explains: "Conflict was always, ever, just something introduced from the outside by alien forces (liberals, Communists), who revealed themselves, in that very act of disturbance, as aliens, enemies to all that was good and true, natural and right. That was how Reagan saw the world. This was how he radiated

233 This self-justifying worldview is perhaps best summarized in Nixon's famous statement to David Frost that "when the president does it, it's not illegal." See John W. Dean, *Conservatives Without Conscience*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2007).

the aura that made others feel so good."[234] In Reagan's binary worldview, his identification with his corporate employers as the best way to produce progress and provide for the general welfare made government the rival to this claim.

Reagan's talent for antithesis is exemplified in his speech in favor of Barry Goldwater's candidacy for president in 1964 called "A Time for Choosing."[235] In this speech, Reagan used rhetoric typical of populism to lay out the opposition between the market and government that I discussed in the first part of this analysis: "This is the issue of this election: Whether we believe in our capacity for self-government or whether we abandon the American revolution and confess that a little intellectual elite in a far-distant capitol can plan our lives for us better than we can plan them ourselves." For Reagan, the "self-government" enshrined in the Constitution was best expressed through the "self-interest" that (supposedly) drives the market rather than the bureaucratic experts in Washington D.C..

As he would later say in a phrase best known from his first inaugural address but which he had been using for years: "Government is not the solution to our problems, government is the problem."[236] The logic goes that because government imposes limits on the power of the market, the failure of government to absolutely eliminate problems

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234 Perlstein, 398.

235 Ronald Reagan, "Ronald Reagan's Time Choosing Speech." *CSPAN.org*, accessed April 9, 2017, https://www.c-span.org/video/?153897-1/ronald-reagans-time-choosing-speech.

236 Ronald Reagan, "Inaugural Address - January 20, 1981," *Reagan Library*, accessed May 9, 2017. https://reaganlibrary.archives.gov/archives/speeches/1981/12081a.htm.
In Perelstein's biography he talks about how Reagan used the famous phrase during his failed 1976 campaign.

like poverty proves that those restrictions should be lifted so the free market can perfect the world in accordance with the Constitution. In keeping with this Manichean worldview, during his "Time for Choosing" address Reagan calls those who advocate more government programs "enemies" who he asks his audience to fight with a stirring call to action: "You and I have a rendezvous with destiny."

Sarah Palin heard that call and frequently referenced Reagan in her speeches at Tea Party events from 2009 to 2016. In the opening to this chapter, I mentioned that the Tea Party Patriots held their convention on the anniversary of Reagan's birthday, where Palin and the other speakers appealed to his memory as a source of inspiration for their own movement. Palin begins her speech by wishing Reagan a happy birthday, and proceeds to conjure his spirit as the motivating force behind the movement:

> Let us get caught up in the big ideas. To do so would be a fitting tribute to Ronald Reagan, especially tonight, as he would have turned 99. No longer with us, his spirit lives on and his American dream endures. He knew the best of our country is not all gathered in Washington, D.C. It is here in our communities where families live, and children learn, and children with special needs are welcomed in this world and embraced.[237]

For Palin, the "real America" is made up of the type of small communities shown in Reagan's 1984 campaign ad "Morning in America," which are placed in opposition to the "isolated" experts in the big cities, especially Washington D.C.: "The best of America can be found in places where patriots are brave enough and free enough to be able to stand up and speak up; and where small businesses grow our economy one job at a time;

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237 Sarah Palin, "Sarah Palin's Speech at the Republican National Convention," *New York Times,* last accessed March 15, 2014, http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/president/conventions/videos/20080903_PALIN_SPEECH.html.

and folks like Reagan, we know that America is still that 'shining city on a hill.'" Most explicitly, Palin invokes a line of succession for the true people: "These are enduring truths and these enduring truths have been passed down from Washington to Lincoln to Reagan and now to you." If the Tea Party is the true people whose identification with Ronald Reagan helps justify their claim to Constitutional authority, then what does that make the majority of Americans who did not support the Tea Party?

The conjuring of Reagan as the animating spirit behind the Tea Party brings with it his own tendency to divide the world into good people and bad people according to their fidelity to a similar interpretation of the Constitution. For the Tea Party, the embodiment of the false claimant is Barack Obama. To be fair, it makes sense that the Tea Party would focus their animus on the president as they moved from a social movement to the political realm with the success of candidates they supported. They campaigned on their opposition to Obama. Palin only named Obama three times in her Tea Party convention address, but throughout it and her other rhetoric she identifies Obama with elitists whose appeal to expertise is framed in opposition to the "common sense" that guides the Tea Party, which makes the elitists suspect: "So it makes you wonder, what truly is their motivation? What is their intention if they won't consider even these common sense, broad-based support ideas that would work?" These questions are rhetorical, but elsewhere in the speech she gives her audience plenty of material to complete the enthymeme: "But unlike the elitists who denounce this movement -- they just don't want to hear the message -- I've traveled across this great country and I've talked to the patriotic men and women who make up the Tea Party movement." Because

the Tea Party comprises the true people defined by their fidelity to the infallible Constitution, the enemy is any challenge to their authority.

The warrant for the belief that enemies are those who "don't want to hear the message" and instead appeal to their expertise rather than the common sense of conservatives was described by Max Weber over a century ago in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.*[238] Weber argued that the development of capitalism in northern European countries alongside the Protestant reformation was not accidental. Protestantism did not create capitalism, but the culture of Protestantism (especially John Calvin) influenced capitalism's development. Specifically, Protestantism promoted individualism by rejecting the authority of the Catholic Church and its inherently social sacraments in favor of a direct relationship between the believer and God. Within the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, the claim that the Bible is divinely-inspired derives from its historical development as a product of the Church. After the development of the printing press, the priesthood lost its monopoly on interpretation of scripture and so the interpretive authority was reversed: the true church would be that which is in most accordance with the Bible. Of course, most Protestant churches still have preachers or some other form of priesthood, but Weber's thesis is that the theology that developed from Protestant interpretation created a problem that capitalism provided the answer to.

The question applies whether it is the Constitution or the Bible: if the text is infallible, how do we know if our reading of it is faithful? As Weber explains, the

238 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism: And Other Writings*, trans. Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells (New York: Penguin Classics, 2002).

Calvinist doctrine of predestination divided the world into saved and damned, so that the question of salvation comes down to whether God has chosen the individual believer. Any uncertainty may indicate that God did not grant the individual the gift of faith, and so the interpretive logic is recursive: I know I am chosen because my interpretation of the Bible tells me so and I know that interpretation is correct because I am chosen. Our work in the world is not the means of salvation, but we can manifest our faith though work, as Weber says:

> On the one hand it is held to be an absolute duty to consider oneself chosen, and to combat all doubts and temptations of the devil, since lack of self-confidence is the result of insufficient faith, hence of imperfect grace […] On the other hand, in order to attain that self-confidence intense worldly activity is recommended as the most suitable means. It and it alone disperses religious doubts and gives the certainty of grace.[239]

Because Calvin taught that the elect are chosen to manifest God's will in the world, those who are chosen will be known by their fruits in productive activity. The contemporary preacher who takes this theology to its logical conclusion is Joel Ossteen, whose "Prosperity Gospel" could be summarized as "If Jesus loves you, He will make you rich (so send me money)." Again, capitalism was not caused by Protestant ideas, but those ideas shaped the roots of capitalist ideology so that one may promote the ideology without having any connection to the theology. Even so, because of the influence of the religious right, many conservatives *do* have a connection to some variation of Calvinism and so it should be no surprise that their worldview exalts the market as the means through which God divides the chosen from the damned, the makers and the takers.

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239 Weber, 112.

The Tea Party's claim to be the true people rests on identification with Ronald Reagan because he provides them with a formula for restoring their faith in the market after the economic crisis: project all blame onto the government. The election of Barack Obama was a threat to the Tea Party's claim to be the true chosen people because they did not elect him to represent them. Even worse, Obama proposed new government programs like the Affordable Care Act as an attempt to deal with issues that the Tea Party adherents believed were best solved by the (unregulated) free market. Palin and other Tea Party rhetors follow Reagan's example by pointing to the continued existence of problems after Obama's election as proof that his promises were false. Perhaps the most explicit statement of antagonism to Obama was in the practice of Tea Party responses to the State of the Union Address in addition to the traditional opposition party response.

The first Tea Party response to the State of the Union was delivered by Rep. Michele Bachmann of Minnesota. In this speech, Bachmann invokes Reagan without naming him through mimicry of his tendency to provides carefully-selected statistics in support of an argument: "Let me show you a chart. Here are unemployment rates over the past 10 years. In October of 2001, our national unemployment rate was at 5.3%. In 2008, it was at 6.6%. But just eight months after President Obama promised lower unemployment, that rate spiked to a staggering 10.1%. Today, unemployment is at 9.4% with about 400,000 new claims every week."[240] For Bachmann, Obama's failure to instantly solve all America's problems shows that his promises are rooted in a false claim

240 "Transcript: Tea Party Response from Rep. Bachmann," *NPR.org*, accessed April 9, 2017, http://www.npr.org/2011/01/26/133230238/transcript-tea-party-response-from-rep-bachmann.

to the authority of the Constitution through government, and the solution is the free market.

The free market theme continued in the subsequent Tea Party responses. For example, in 2014 Senator Mike Lee of Utah seemed to appropriate the rhetoric of Occupy in discussing income inequality but placing blame for it on the government.[241] Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky's 2013 speech explicitly conjured Reagan against Obama: "Ronald Reagan said, government is not the answer to the problem, government is the problem. Tonight, the President told the nation he disagrees. President Obama believes government is the solution: More government, more taxes, more debt."[242] He follows this observation with another dichotomy: "What America needs is not Robin Hood but Adam Smith. In the year we won our independence, Adam Smith described what creates the Wealth of Nations. He described a limited government that largely did not interfere with individuals and their pursuit of happiness." This reference to Adam Smith, the foundational thinker of capitalism, creates a link where Obama's failure to adhere to the Constitution is a result of his supposed inability to respect the authority of (Calvinist) Adam Smith whose "invisible hand" is said to guide the market, making it the true manifestation of the Divine intention in ordaining this nation as "exceptional." In what is either a call back to the Declaration of Independence, or perhaps the senator's tradition of celebrating Festivus, he supports this argument by airing his grievances against Obama.

241 "Full Text: Sen. Mike Lee's Tea Party Response to Obama's State of the Union Speech," *US News & World Report*, accessed April 9, 2017, https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2014/01/28/full-text-sen-mike-lees-tea-party-response-to-obamas-state-of-the-union-speech.

242 "Full Text of Rand Paul's Tea Party Response to State of the Union," *US News & World Report*, accessed April 9, 2017, https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2013/02/12/full-text-of-rand-pauls-tea-party-response-to-state-of-the-union.

Obama may have been uniquely capable of giving the Tea Party an enemy onto which they can project all their anxieties. First, there is the obvious historical importance of the first black president. The debate over the racism of the Tea Party is something that I will not offer a definitive answer to here, but it is noteworthy that claims that Obama had been born in Kenya rather than Hawaii were widely circulated among Tea Party adherents.[243] Obama's successor to the presidency, Donald Trump, was one of the leading voices in this move to question Obama's legitimacy. More broadly, Obama was marked as suspect because of his *difference,* with even mainstream Republican 2012 presidential candidate Mitt Romney often remarking on how Obama's ideas were "foreign."

Second, as a former professor of Constitutional law, not only does he belong to the class of experts that the Tea Party vilifies, his expertise is in the very thing they use as the basis of their claims. As an expert with formal training, Obama was an explicit threat to the Tea Party's claim to interpretive authority through their "common sense." Throughout Obama's presidency a major theme for the Tea Party was the idea that he was an illegitimate president who did not respect the Constitution.[244] In Palin's speech, she used his expertise as evidence of his unfitness to serve as president: "We need a Commander-in-Chief, not a professor of law standing at the lectern." The context of this claim in her discussion of all the ways she believes the administration failed in the War on Terror leads to the next reason Obama embodied the enemy for the Tea Party.

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243 Stephanie Condon, "Poll: 'Birther' Myth Persists Among Tea Partiers, All Americans," *CBS News,* April, 2010, http://www.cbsnews.com/news/poll-birther-myth-persists-among-tea-partiers-all-americans/.
244 As an example, see the Jon McNaughton paintings I opened this section with.

Third, his name is Barack *Hussein* Obama and it is still not uncommon to hear Tea Partiers and conservatives in general add emphasis to his middle name when talking about him. This focus on the middle name given to him by his Muslim father from Kenya draws attention to Obama's otherness. After all, we had spent years fighting another enemy named Hussein, and the successor to the Cold War as the dominant international struggle of our time is against groups who claim to fight in the name of Islam.[245] As late as 2015, polls showed that nearly half of respondents who identified with the Tea Party believed that Obama was a Muslim.[246] The link between Obama and terrorism was usually implied, but during the election of 2016 Donald Trump made it explicit when he claimed that "Obama is the founder of ISIS." After he was asked whether he meant that Obama's policies created the conditions for the rise of the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, he reiterated: "No, Obama founded ISIS."[247] On the one hand, the Tea Party obsession with terrorism may be a response to the trauma of 9/11 and the moral clarity of having an enemy to succeed the fallen Soviet Union. In the end, however, these terrorist groups share the common thread that unites all those outside the Tea Party as enemies: Al Qaeda and ISIS promote themselves as doing God's will on earth, and so are rivals to the Tea Party's claim to absolute truth.

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245 The Arabic word for "struggle" is, of course: jihad.

246 Jennifer Agiesta Director, "Misperceptions about Barack Obama's Faith Still Exist." *CNN*, accessed April 11, 2017, http://www.cnn.com/2015/09/13/politics/barack-obama-religion-christian-misperceptions/index.html.

247 Tal Kopan. "Donald Trump: I Meant That Obama Founded ISIS, Literally," *CNN*, accessed April 11, 2017, http://www.cnn.com/2016/08/11/politics/donald-trump-hugh-hewitt-obama-founder-isis/index.html.

Finally, Obama's campaign themes of "hope" and "change" made him an avatar of that ultimate threat to the Tea Party: the future. Before and even during his presidency, a common theme of his speeches was that when the authors of the Constitution wrote "to form a more perfect union," they were not talking about the world they created but a world that is always, already yet-to-come. As he said in his March 2008 speech addressing issues of race in America: "This union may never be perfect, but generation after generation has shown that it can always be perfected. And today, whenever I find myself feeling doubtful or cynical about this possibility, what gives me the most hope is the next generation - the young people whose attitudes and beliefs and openness to change have already made history in this election."[248] This attitude is in keeping with a progressive faith in the future. It is a direct challenge to the conservative orientation, best described in the original mission statement of *National Review,* authored by that germinal conservative alternative intellectual William F. Buckley: "It stands athwart history, yelling Stop."[249] The ultimate sin of Obama was that he pointed out that the past was not perfect and thus posed a challenge to the Tea Party's territory.

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248 Barack Obama, "A More Perfect Union," *BarackObama.com,* last accessed March 15,2014. http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/hisownwords.

249 William F. Buckley, Jr., "Our Mission Statement," *National Review*, accessed April 11, 2017. http://www.nationalreview.com/article/223549/our-mission-statement-william-f-buckley-jr.

TRIBES, TERRITORIES, AND TIME

> Never forget: the press is the enemy. The press is the enemy. The press is the enemy. The establishment is the enemy. The professors are the enemy. The professors are the enemy.
>
> --Richard Nixon to Henry Kissinger, December 14, 1972[250]

The Tea Party is a response to the crisis of representation precipitated by the economic collapse of 2008. In this chapter, I have discussed how conservative media serve as a priesthood for this movement who project guilt for the crisis onto the government and create a virtual territory for the tribe through a rhetoric of division that strips the authority from traditional gatekeepers of information. This priesthood derives its own authority from what Deleuze called the dogmatic image of thought, which is reinforced by the centralized broadcast media through which the narrative is proliferated. The image of thought that governs the logic of representation for the Tea Party is one in which a certain interpretation of the Constitution is seen as the guide for distinguishing the true people from their enemy according to their advocacy of the free market or government as a means of curing our social ills. The narrative that unites the tribe restores their faith in neoliberal capitalism by framing the government as an external enemy that must be conquered for the movement to gain their rightful power, rather than just other Americans who might disagree with them on tax policy.

The virtual territory that the Tea Party must defend is an idealized past in which the free market manifests the liberty promised in the Constitution through individual

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250 Richard M. Nixon, "Sample Conversation 3: December 14, 1972," *Nixontapes.org*, accessed May 9, 2017, http://nixontapes.org/newtapes/19721214-823-1b-timecode43m17s-the_press_is_the_enemy-OVAL-Nixon-Kissinger-Haig.mp3.

consumer choices. The enemy threat is a future in which Progressivism has allowed government to overpower the market and given it control over every aspect of our lives. The crisis can only be resolved when the true people, identified by their faith in the narrative, use their common sense to regain the claim to representation. In this section, I conclude my analysis of the Tea Party by discussing two of the high priests of the movement – Glenn Beck and Sean Hannity – who helped to rhetorically constitute the territory of the Tea Party by building a wall between the movement and their enemies as embodied in the media. In framing the disagreement over the proper relationship between the market and government as an apocalyptic confrontation between the true people and their enemies in the intellectual elite, Beck and Hannity echo the paranoid rhetoric of Nixon's "Silent Majority."

Glenn Beck had his own flavor of Tea Party. He launched the 9/12 Project in March of 2009 in a series of episodes on his Fox News show that he called "You Are Not Alone."[251] His rationale was simple: "The system has been perverted and must be restored." His answer was a call to return to the past, specifically September 12th, 2001 when he said Americans were united in moral clarity. As part of this project, he called upon his audience to contemplate the "nine values and twelve principles" that he spent subsequent episodes explaining with examples of various Founding Fathers that he said embodied them. He set his show up like a classroom, complete with chalkboard where he would explain how various groups (including terrorists, communists, and the Obama administration) were connected. The ultimate enemy for Glenn Beck was

251 Glenn Beck, "You Are Not Alone," *The Glenn Beck Program, Fox News*, March 13, 2009.

"Progressivism," which had such control over the education system that Beck and those like him had to create their own institutions of learning to counter it.[252]

As part of Beck's mission to provide an alternative to academia, he wrote a series of books reinterpreting the founding documents of the United States as a warning against Progressivism.[253] To broaden the curriculum, he often had Christian Revisionist historian David Barton on to talk about how it is a Progressive myth that the country was founded on Enlightenment principles, and that the United States was ordained by God to establish His kingdom on Earth.[254] The alternative history that Beck promoted was a way of unifying the tribe through their claim to the territory of the past. One of the clearest examples of this attempt to claim the past was a rally Beck organized in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. on August 28, 2010, the anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech.

The "Restoring Honor" rally was a celebration of America's religious heritage as well as the military. When controversy erupted over the timing of the event, Beck invited King's niece Aleva King to speak alongside himself and Sarah Palin. Beck also invited ministers of various denominations to support his claim that this was not a political event.

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252 Strangely enough, like Sean Hannity and Rush Limbaugh, Glenn Beck did not finish college.

253 Glenn Beck, *Glenn Beck's Common Sense: The Case Against an Out-of-Control Government, Inspired by Thomas Paine*, (New York: Threshold Editions, 2009); Beck, Glenn. *The Original Argument: The Federalists' Case for the Constitution, Adapted for the 21st Century*, (New York: Threshold Editions, 2011).

254 Beck's relationship with Barton has continued after his Fox News show was cancelled in 2011 and he started his own online media empire *The Blaze*. See, for example, this recent clip in which Barton and Beck discuss the divine inspiration for the founding documents, the need for people to read the original documents themselves rather than rely on expert interpretation or an appeal to historical context, and how their audience can correctly interpret these documents for themselves: Glenn Beck, "The Vault: David Barton Shares the Power That Comes From the Original Source," accessed May 9, 2017. http://www.glennbeck.comhttp://www.glennbeck.com/2017/01/27/the-vault-david-barton-shares-the-power-that-comes-from-the-original-source/.

In his own comments, he made the purpose clear: "If you look at history, America has been both terribly good and terribly bad. It has been both, but to concentrate on the bad instead of learning from the bad and repairing the bad and then looking to the good that is still out in front of us within our reach – We have a choice today. We can either let those scars crush us or redeem us."[255] By calling for a return to the past to redeem America, Beck and others in the Tea Party set the boundaries of a virtual territory that needed defending. One of the strongest defenders of this territory was Sean Hannity.

Hannity spent a lot of airtime on the Tea Party, having special episodes dedicated to the movement and frequently appearing at Tea Party events that he broadcast nationally. In the priesthood of the conservative media apparatus, if Beck is the teacher, Breitbart the warrior-monk, and Limbaugh the Pope (claiming infallibility), Hannity's role is as Sean the Revelator. His claim to authority is as the source of information that, as his radio promos say, "the liberal media doesn't want you to hear." The contrast between Limbaugh's style and Hannity's is the strongest. As I said before, Limbaugh's show consists of reading articles from various sources and offering his interpretation. He does not have guests, but he will take calls and if someone calls in who disagrees with him he engages them in a debate. Hannity on the other hand has a lot of guests who mostly serve as mirror as he gives his take and then asks them either to "react" or if they agree. Most of his guests agree with him, and when he has guests on who do not it seems like the purpose is for him to ask a passive-aggressive question then start yelling over

255 Glenn Beck, "Keynote Address at the Restoring Honor Rally," *American Rhetoric*, accessed April 11, 2017, http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/glennbeckrestoringhonorkeynote.htm.

them as soon as they try to answer.[256] His running theme is that he is revealing shocking information that the liberal media is trying to hide, and so his audience should only trust him and people like him as a source of information. The funny thing is that his radio show follows Limbaugh's in a lot of markets, so at times he will say "no one is talking about this in the liberal media" within an hour of Limbaugh discussing an article about that topic from a mainstream source.

I mention Hannity because his rhetoric is a good example of the final theme in the narrative of the Tea Party: the creation of a border to define the tribe's territory. If Reagan acts as the virtual core of the movement, the boundaries are protected by Richard Nixon. The Tea Party's identity is based on a negation of their enemies in rhetoric that can be traced directly back to Richard Nixon's trope of the "Silent Majority," as Douglas E. Schoen puts clearly:

> Perhaps Nixon's most enduring influence on the GOP today is his formulation of conservative populism—a force that first took shape in his 1968 campaign and that, nearly half a century later, is still the vital engine powering the American Right, from the Tea Party to talk radio. Nixon put conservative populism on the map by pioneering a new target of populist opposition: not big business and the rich per se—the usual targets of FDR and other Democrats—but rather the intelligentsia, whether in the media, the academy, or the professions. Nixon

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256 For example, at the time of this writing Hannity has spent weeks focused on an attempt to redeem Trump's claim that the Obama administration was "wiretapping" Trump Tower during the campaign. One of his frequent guests has been Bill Binney, who claims to be a former NSA officer who helped design a system that he says the government can use to spy on everyone all the time. On a March 9, 2017 episode Hannity was outraged at the possibility that the Democrats could use the intelligence apparatus of the United States to release private information, such as emails, to embarrass their political opponents. Without skipping a beat, he went on to claim that this was all a coverup for the corruption of the Hillary Clinton campaign that was revealed in the Wikileaks dump of DNC emails. The story keeps changing, but the general theme is that any investigation by the Obama administration of possible ties between the Trump campaign and Russian hackers is the real scandal because it is only designed to hurt Trump politically. He has even discussed the possibility that the CIA hacked the DNC emails and released them so that they could then blame it on the Russians and frame Trump to cover up for Hillary losing the election after her campaign was damaged by the release of the emails.

> portrayed these groups as privileged, out-of-touch mandarins no longer fit for governance.[257]

Most biographers attribute Nixon's animosity to the elites to an intense insecurity as a highly intelligent person without the Ivy League pedigree of many of the experts of the time, but there was a political reason for this paranoia as well.

In the past few years many of the documents from Nixon's presidency, including the famous White House tapes, have been declassified, cataloged, and made available to historians and the public. One of the first writers to take this new information into account was Tim Weiner, whose biography of Nixon includes details that help to explain why Watergate happened and that I will try to summarize as briefly as I can:[258] When the Pentagon Papers were released to *The New York Times*, Nixon started to obsess about leaks. He had good reason to be worried, because during the 1968 presidential campaign he had worked with foreign agents to sabotage Lyndon Johnson's peace negotiations in Vietnam so he would not lose the war as a relevant campaign issue. Nixon thought that LBJ had bugged Nixon's campaign plane, but LBJ did not need to surveil Nixon. He had other sources and he found out what Nixon had done but kept it quiet to avoid a possible Constitutional crisis. Nixon created "The Plumbers" to hunt down leaks and they broke into the DNC headquarters at the Watergate hotel to try to find information they could use to discredit their enemies. When it was discovered that Nixon had tried to use the intelligence services and Department of Justice to undermine the congressional

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257 Douglas E Schoen, *The Nixon Effect: How Richard Nixon's Presidency Fundamentally Changed American Politics*, (New York: Encounter Books, 2015), Kindle Locations 201-206.

258 Tim Weiner, *One Man Against the World: The Tragedy of Richard Nixon*, (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2016).

investigation into the incident, members of his own party told him that if he did not resign he would face impeachment. And the catalyst for all of this becoming a scandal was reporting by Woodward and Bernstein in *The Washington Post.*

Nixon's antipathy toward the press and academics is most clearly illustrated in the quotation from a conversation with Henry Kissinger that I began this section with, but his strategy of framing the press as the enemy goes back to earlier campaigns. Perhaps most famously, after his defeat in the governor's race in California in 1962, Nixon held his "last press conference" in which he told the press "you won't have Nixon to kick around anymore."[259] During his presidency, his vice president Spiro Agnew gave a well-known speech that is often cited as the beginning of the conservative obsession with media bias in which he criticized press coverage of a recent Nixon speech.[260] Of course, their critique of the media did not protect either Agnew or Nixon from having to resign when their corruption became public, but it may have helped set the stage for conservatives to elect their own media figure Ronald Reagan as president of the United States.

The development of conservative media in the years after the Nixon presidency was, in part, a response to the power of the establishment media to bring down a president. When a similar crisis threatened to undermine the Reagan administration with the Iran-Contra scandal, conservatives had a more developed system for the

259 "NIXON DENOUNCES PRESS AS BIASED; In 'Last' News Conference, He Attributes His Defeat to Crisis Over Cuba Nixon, Bitter at His Defeat by Brown in California, Denounces the Press as Biased SAYS CUBAN CRISIS COST HIM ELECTION Gives No Hint of Plans-- Asserts Others Will Have to Lead Coast G.O.P. Blames Cuban Crisis Changes His Plans," *The New York Times*, November 8, 1962, https://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9C01EED91F30E03BBC4053DFB7678389679EDE&legacy=true.

260 Spiro Agnew, "American Rhetoric: Spiro Agnew -- Television News Coverage (Nov 13, 1969)," accessed May 9, 2017, http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/spiroagnewtvnewscoverage.htm.

dissemination of information in early versions of talk radio. During the Clinton administration, conservatives could turn to Fox News and the Drudge Report as a refuge and source for information on the latest scandal. By the time of the George W. Bush presidency, Nixon's media architect Roger Ailes had created Fox News.[261] The development of blogs and social media have given conservatives a vast array of information resources that can be used to restore faith in their status as the chosen heirs to the Constitution.

The Tea Party's faith in the infallibility of free markets as embodied in their hero Ronald Reagan depends upon a Nixonian paranoia against outside sources of information to maintain its coherence. Conservative media figures like Glenn Beck, Sean Hannity, and Andrew Breitbart serve as defenders of this faith by applying the dogmatic image of thought in which representations are judged according to their fidelity to the conservative interpretation of the Constitution. In this narrative, it is government that is responsible for failing to live up to the promises made in the document that provides its foundation, and the only way to return to an idealized past is by members of the Tea Party taking control of the government to restore power to the market. The Tea Party lays claim to the virtual territory of U.S. political discourse by claiming that they are the true people who deserve representation and that those who fail to maintain fidelity to their narrative are false pretenders.

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261 See David Brock, David, Ari Rabin-Havt, and Media Matters for America, *The Fox Effect: How Roger Ailes Turned a Network into a Propaganda Machine*, (New York: Anchor, 2012); and Gabriel Sherman, *The Loudest Voice in the Room: How the Brilliant, Bombastic Roger Ailes Built Fox News--and Divided a Country*, (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2017).

At the start of this chapter I talked about Andrew Breitbart as the escaped prisoner who led his followers out of the false cave into another cave that he claimed was the true representation of reality. The Tea Party did not have a formal leadership structure, but it did have a priesthood of media figures that helped maintain the coherence of the tribal territory. After several years, however, one of the members of the tribe who had been particularly entranced by the shadows on the conservative media cave wall rose up and declared that to maintain the fidelity of the cave "we have to build a wall." In 2017, that man became the 45th president of the United States: Donald Trump.

Chapter 4: The Politics of Presence in Occupy's Assemblies

> If there is one thing I know, it is that the [one] percent loves a crisis. When people are panicked and desperate and no one seems to know what to do, that is the ideal time to push through their wish list of pro-corporate policies […] And there is only one thing that can block this tactic, and fortunately, it's a very big thing: the 99 percent. And that 99 percent is taking to the streets from Madison to Madrid to say "No. We will not pay for your crisis."
>
> --Naomi Klein to Occupy Wall Street[262]

The police arrived in the middle of the night to evict the protestors from Zuccotti Park in New York City. Mayor Bloomberg had given the order to empty the park almost two months after Occupy Wall Street first set up tents and started holding meetings just blocks from the New York Stock Exchange. According to James Barron and Colin Moynihan of *The New York Times*, the police arrested nearly 200 protestors in the process of clearing the park, as most left willingly but some held out:

> The protesters rallied around an area known as the kitchen, near the middle of the park, and began putting up makeshift barricades with tables and pieces of scrap wood. Over the next two hours, dozens of protesters left the park while a core group of about 100 dug in around the food area. Many locked arms and defied police orders to leave. Some sang 'We Shall Overcome' and chanted at the officers to 'disobey your orders.'[263]

Ultimately, the protestors were removed and told that they could return to the park after it had been cleaned but would not be allowed to set up encampments to stay overnight any longer. The police disrupted the actual encampment, but just as Occupy drew on previous movements, the form and tactics of Occupy continue to be used in movements from Black Lives Matter to the

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262 Naomi Klein, "Occupy Wall Street: The Most Important Thing in the World Now | Naomi Klein," accessed April 17, 2017, http://www.naomiklein.org/articles/2011/10/occupy-wall-street-most-important-thing-world-now.

263 James Barron and Colin Moynihan, "Police Oust Occupy Wall Street Protesters at Zuccotti Park," *The New York Times*, November 15, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/16/nyregion/police-begin-clearing-zuccotti-park-of-protesters.html.

protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Occupy, or the "99 percent movement" as it is sometimes known, began as encampments in major cities around the world during the fall of 2011 that were inspired by similar protest occupations in Latin America and Europe. In an interview with Justin Elliott of *Salon.com*, editor in chief of *Adbusters* Kalle Lasn said that in addition to the movements of the Arab Spring, the original call to "occupy Wall Street" that ran in ads, emails, and a blogpost from the magazine was inspired by the Situationist movement in France from the 1960s as a response to the Tea Party: "The idea is that if you have a very powerful meme – a very powerful idea – and the moment is ripe, then that is enough to ignite a revolution."[264] About a month before the start of the protest activists met near the familiar bull statue near Wall Street to organize. During the preliminary meeting, anthropologist and anarchist activist David Graeber suggested the process that would become the signature of the Occupy movement: "general assemblies" in which decisions are made through consensus.[265] Like the Tea Party, Occupy was based on discontent with the existing system of political and economic power and advocated returning authority to "the people." Occupy offered an alternative to the Tea Party's politics of representation in which the "true" people are distinguished from the false by their adherence to a set of ideals, however; Occupy snubbed the system of representation itself and instead defined the people through their participation in the process of consensus-building. Rather than "take America back" by organizing around a coherent *pre-existing* narrative, as the Tea Party had done, Occupy was open

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264 Justin Elliott, "The Origins of Occupy Wall Street Explained," *Salon*, accessed June 1, 2017, http://www.salon.com/2011/10/04/adbusters_occupy_wall_st/.

265 James Miller, "Is Democracy Still in the Streets?" in Byrne, Janet, *The Occupy Handbook*, (New York: Back Bay Books, 2012).

to a diversity of ideas as long as the activists were willing to engage as equals in the encampments. In rejecting representation, Occupy's demands were difficult to translate to external audiences. The insistence on adherence to anarchist principles of direct democracy and a form of authenticity defined by immediacy meant that Occupy manifested what Jacques Derrida called a "metaphysics of presence" in which the recognition of others would undo the ideal of unrestrained agency. Put another way: the tension of Occupy was that the claim to be "the 99 percent" while resisting external authority meant that engaging the majority of Americans who did not participate in the encampments would surrender some of the movement's claim to sovereignty. Over time the requirement of presence in the actual occupations became unsustainable as the outside world crept into their territory and much of the organizing of Occupy had to move online.[266]

Confrontations with the police were common during the initial phase of Occupy. On October 1st, 2011, hundreds of protestors were arrested on the Brooklyn Bridge. According to some of the protestors, the police guided their march onto the bridge at which point they were told they were under arrest for impeding traffic.[267] After an officer pepper-sprayed a group of students sitting in a chain on the ground at UC-Davis, the image went viral as a meme in which the pepper-spraying cop was placed into various contexts to indicate the callowness of police oppression.[268] Occupy Oakland may have been the place where the police crackdown was most

266 Michael Levitin, "The Triumph of Occupy Wall Street." *The Atlantic*, June 10, 2015, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/the-triumph-of-occupy-wall-street/395408/.
267 "700 Arrested After Protest On Brooklyn Bridge," *NPR.org*, accessed April 16, 2017, http://www.npr.org/2011/10/01/140983353/about-500-arrested-after-protest-on-brooklyn-bridge.
268 "The Pepper-Spraying Cop Gets Photoshop Justice," *The Guardian*, November 23, 2011, sec. World news, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/nov/23/pepper-spraying-cop-photoshop-justice.

fierce, with multiple confrontations including the use of tear gas and mass arrests.[269] So what was going on with this animosity between the police and Occupy?

There are many possible interpretations of Occupy's disruption by the police. Naomi Wolf, who was arrested at an Occupy Wall Street demonstration, claims that the suppression was a coordinated effort between federal officials, local police, and the banks that were the target of the movement.[270] Gavin Aronson, writing for *Mother Jones*, disputes Wolf's claims by pointing out the evidence she relies upon does not necessarily lead to the conclusions she reaches.[271] From a progressive perspective, social movement tactics that employ civil disobedience always invite a police response as a defense of a challenged status quo.[272] David Graeber, who has been called one of the architects of Occupy, pointed to police repression as proof that the state could not countenance the rejection of their authority embodied in Occupy's embrace of the principles of anarchism.[273] Graeber directly contrasts his approach with a Marxist one, and it comes as no surprise that it invited a Marxist response that calls Graeber and his comrades in Occupy "naïve" for not basing their movement on an exclusively working class identity, and therefore misidentifying the police as part of the 99%: "Police, by their choice of occupation and their socialization as the armed fist of the ruling class, have opted for the anti-working-class side of

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269 David Morgan, "Riot Police arrest 'Occupy Oakland' protesters," *CBS/AP*, accessed April 16, 2017, http://www.cbsnews.com/news/riot-police-arrest-occupy-oakland-protesters/.

270 "Revealed: How the FBI Coordinated the Crackdown on Occupy," *The Guardian*, December 29, 2012, sec. Opinion, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/dec/29/fbi-coordinated-crackdown-occupy.

271 Gavin Aronsen, "What the FBI's Occupy Docs Do—and Don't—Reveal," *Mother Jones*. Accessed April 16, 2017, http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2013/01/occupy-fbi-documents-naomi-wolf.

272 So from this point-of-view, the police did not crack down on the Tea Party largely because the Tea Party mostly engaged in permitted demonstrations and conventional political activity rather than civil disobedience.

273 David Graeber, "Occupy Wall Street's Anarchist Roots | OccupyWallSt.org," accessed April 16, 2017, https://occupywallst.org/article/occupy-wall-streets-anarchist-roots/.

the fundamental divide."[274] Finally, conspiracy theorist David Icke recorded a documentary the day after the park was cleared in which he interviewed multiple participants who said that the police were working for the New World Order controlled by the Illuminati.[275]

Members of Occupy could believe any of these explanations for the police response. Unlike the Tea Party's claim to authority based on fidelity to a *common sense* of how the world works, Occupy's rejection of external authority offered activists the promise that they could write their own narratives. In the previous chapter, my analysis of the Tea Party narrative was based on their explicit claim that they did not need leadership because the movement was defined by adherence to a common set of ideas. The Tea Party's insistence on a common interpretive framework is reversed in Occupy, in which individuals may have many different meanings but be united in an affective affiliation.[276] In other words, Occupy brought together people who had similar experiences but not necessarily similar understandings of those experiences, mutually committed to a rejection of representation in favor of embodied presence. In this chapter, my analysis focuses on the core *process* developed in the New York City chapter of Occupy Wall Street. The reason I focus on this specific encampment of Occupy is that it was where activists developed the structure that other Occupy encampments would follow. The

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274 "Occupy Wall Street: A Marxist Assessment," accessed April 16, 2017, http://lrp-cofi.org/statements/OWS_030112.html.

275 David Icke, *David Icke's "Ad Lib" Documentary at: Occupy Wall Street*, accessed April 16, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=99nvx3m2fbQ.

276 Throughout this chapter I use the term "affect," which has inspired an entire body of literature. It is not necessary to engage that literature to further my argument. I am using "affect" in the sense that Deleuze uses it, borrowing from Spinoza, which I paraphrase as the way agency is increased or decreased through interactions with others. So when I say that Occupy is organized around affective alliances, I mean it is an attempt to increase the collective power of those whose power was reduced by the economic crisis. See Brian Massumi's introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus* for a more complicated definition: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

deliberative process of Occupy allowed activists to express different meanings for their experience of the economic crisis and the signifier “the 99 percent.”

The central argument I have been making in this dissertation is that media technologies play an important part in shaping our perception of a “crisis of representation.” Populist rhetoric is a response to these crises of representation, in a which a group claims that they are the “true people” who are not being represented by existing power structures. Occupy’s solution to the real experience of economic inequality is to reject representation in an attempt to actualize a virtual society in which hierarchy is abolished. In this chapter I argue that the rejection of the principle of representation serves to reinscribe hierarchies of power through the erasure of an outside or other with which the people can engage in democratic dialog. I begin by discussing how the dominant technology of the Internet shapes a regime of truth defined not by fidelity but by *affiliation* and *consensus*. Then, I analyze the process through which the idea of Occupy was disseminated, beginning with the crisis in which the failure of the American Dream to represent reality motivates affective alliances that were expected to produce a new society. Next, I discuss how "the people" who participate in the process of Occupy are distinguished from their enemy through an appeal to authenticity. In describing themselves as the “99%,” ultimately Occupy defines “the people” as (almost all) humans against the legal fiction of the corporation as person. I conclude by discussing how Occupy established a spatial territory to lay claim to the potential to create a new society without hierarchy. Ultimately, the attempt by Occupy to create the future in which power is distributed equally was undermined by the insistence on consensus in which difference must submit to identity.

MEDIA AFFECTS: THE INTERNET AS STRUCTURING TECHNOLOGY

One of the interesting characteristics of Occupy was that it did not appeal to media figures for authority, and when members of the movement went on television or other mainstream outlets they were insistent that they were not leaders. Even so, the main encampment at Zuccotti Park in New York City attracted many leading intellectuals and cultural figures. Speakers at Occupy Wall Street included philosophers Judith Butler and Slavoj Žižek, Nobel-prize winning economist Joseph Stiglitz, documentary filmmaker Michael Moore, and writers Chris Hedges, Naomi Wolf, and Naomi Klein. Philosopher and public intellectual Cornel West was there, as was Kanye West. Perhaps most importantly, Jeff Mangum from the band Neutral Milk Hotel emerged from years of avoiding publicity to perform a live set on October, 6, 2011.[277] There was even a rumor that Radiohead would show up, which would be consistent with their politics, but the rumor turned out to be a hoax.[278]

Occupy appealed to intellectuals and artists because it was a movement centered less on fidelity to ideas from the past and more on creating a new model for society. Žižek explains this purpose well in his remarks to the General Assembly at Occupy Wall Street:

> So what are we doing here? Let me tell you a wonderful, old joke from Communist times. A guy was sent from East Germany to work in Siberia. He knew his mail would be read by censors, so he told his friends: "Let's establish a code. If a letter you get from me is written in blue ink, it is true what I say. If it is written in red ink, it is false." After a month, his friends get the first letter. Everything is in blue. It says, this letter: "Everything is wonderful here. Stores are full of good food. Movie theatres show good films from the west. Apartments are large and luxurious. The only thing you cannot buy is red ink." This is how we live. We have all the freedoms we want. But what we are missing is red ink:

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277 "Jeff Mangum Live at Occupy Wall Street - Liberty Park, NYC (Neutral Milk Hotel)," YouTube, accessed April 16, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvLm01ruV00.

278 Malcolm Harris, "I'm the Jerk Who Pranked Occupy Wall Street," *Gawker*, accessed April 16, 2017, http://gawker.com/5868073/im-the-jerk-who-pranked-occupy-wall-street.
Tom Morello was there though, because of course he was.

> the language to articulate our non-freedom. The way we are taught to speak about freedom— war on terror and so on—falsifies freedom. And this is what you are doing here. You are giving all of us red ink.[279]

In contrast to other populist movements like the Tea Party, in which the purpose was to seize power within the system in the name of the true people, the participants in Occupy experimented with a different model of power. How does technology shape the perception of truth, and by extension the model of power, for Occupy?

The image of thought for Occupy is the Internet. In the previous chapter I used Plato's Allegory of the Cave to describe how conservative media frame themselves as escaped prisoners who see through the shadows and can lead us to reality. Because of the dominant broadcast model, this ersatz escape from the regime of (false) representation creates an alternative information environment in which fidelity to a set of received ideas (ideology) is the criteria for judging truth. If the Tea Party's response to the crisis of representation is to claim that authority derives from fidelity to their representations, Occupy's response to the failure of representations is to reject external authority over representations altogether. In other words, rather than try to escape the cave into a new cave, Occupy attempts to seize the models from the masters so that they can create their own reality.

Productive Consumers: The Internet and Occupy

The observation that Occupy is modeled on the Internet is not a revelation. In my introductory chapter I reviewed prior research on Occupy in which this relationship between

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279 Sarah Shin, "Slavoj Žižek at Occupy Wall Street: 'We are not dreamers, we are the awakening from a dream which is turning into a nightmare," *Verso,* Oct 10, 2011. http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/736.

Occupy and the Internet was a given. Ronald Water Greene and Kevin Douglas Kuswa argue that communication technologies create a new site of protest for the movement.[280] Kevin M. DeLuca, Sean Lawson, and Ye Sun see these technologies as a source of agency for Occupy by giving them control over the means of production of meaning.[281] For Jack Bratich, Occupy is an ecology in which different discourses and interests can come together to exchange tactics and messages.[282] This openness has a risk, however, as Marcos Deseriis points out: when the members of Occupy repeat messages as part of the human microphone--the audience repetition of a speaker's remarks to amply the message--they are sometimes asked to spread messages they don't believe.[283]

The first characteristic of the Internet that had an obvious impact of the structure of Occupy is that the Internet is a distributed network. In contrast to broadcast media technology, the Internet has no center (although, as was recently shown, a lot of the traffic for major sites is hosted on Amazon servers).[284] Manuel Castells argues that this networked structure is vital to new social movements such as Occupy that use the technology of the Internet both to disseminate their message and as a model for organization: "The rapid geographical spread of the

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280 Ronald Walter Greene and Kevin Douglas Kusa, "'From the Arab Spring to Athens, From Occupy Wall Street to Moscow': Regional Accents and the Rhetorical Cartography of Power," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (2012): 271-288.

281 Kevin M. DeLuca, Sean Lawson and Ye Sun, "Occupy Wall Street on the Public Screens of Social Media: The Many Framings of the Birth of a Protest Movement," *Communication, Culture & Critique* 5 (2012): 486-486

282 Jack Bratich, "Occupy All the Dispositifs: Memes, Media Ecologies, and Emergent Bodies Politic," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014), 66.

283 Marco Deseriis, "The People's Mic as Medium in Its Own Right: A Pharmacological Reading," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies,* 11, no. 1 (2014): 42-51.

284 Newcomb, Alyssa. "No, You're Not Going Crazy. Here's Why Part of the Internet Is Acting Up." *NBC News*, February 28, 2017. http://www.nbcnews.com/tech/internet/amazon-web-services-issue-leaves-part-internet-disarray-n726876.

movement reflected its viral diffusion on the Internet. The movement was born on the Internet, diffused by the Internet, and maintained its presence on the Internet, as most occupations set up their own websites, as well as their specific groups and other social networks."[285] The network has nodes, of course, but the structure of the network is primarily in the *links* between these nodes, so that rather than amplify a central message the model becomes one of dissemination in which sources and discourses proliferate. Occupy used the meme "the 99%" to link diverse experiences of the economic crisis through affective alliances that resonate with a failure of the American Dream.

The second characteristic of the Internet that manifests in Occupy is that the Internet is a means for spreading massive amounts of information. Because of both the quantity and diversity of information disseminated through the Internet, old methods of discerning truth have given way to a different image of thought. As Dutch media scholar Geert Lovink argues, the norm is no longer one of interpretation in which information is compared to a model to distinguish the true from the false.[286] Rather, to keep up with the constant flow of information, we must develop techniques of sorting what is salient and what is not worth our attention. According to Lovink, one of the main criteria we use for this sorting is connected with the irony that the main currency in so-called "social" media is the self, or identity: "We constantly login, create profiles, and post status updates to present our Self on the global marketplace of employment, friendship, and

285 Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*, (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2015), 168.
286 Geert Lovink, *Networks Without a Cause: A Critique of Social Media* (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, Mass: Polity, 2012).

love."[287] The need to maintain a personal brand online has become one of the main filters we use for information, Lovink argues. The old model in which truth is judged according to adherence to a common model has given way to truths that inhere in the individual as a way of differentiating the self from others while also providing openings for links to various communities. This customization of information to the individual is partially a result of the technology itself, because the means through which we make connections to the larger network is usually a device of some kind that is private and often personalized to our own needs (cell phone, laptop, tablet – all of which are mass-produced for individuals). In short, with this new image of thought it is true if it is about you.

The need for new content to meet the demand for constant self-promotion is part of the political economy of the Internet. Despite the ideal of the Internet as an anarchic, anonymous zone of absolute freedom, many of the ways we interface with the network are designed by large corporations for mining information that can be used for advertising (Google, Facebook, Twitter, many websites). Rather than offer fairly homogeneous content to appeal to the largest audience possible, in accordance with a broadcast model, producers of Internet content must differentiate themselves to get clicks, shares, and the various other currencies that determine things like ad revenue. As Henry Jenkins (and others) have observed, the biggest distinction between broadcast media and these new media is the way content is produced:

> The circulation of media content – across different media systems, competing media economies, and national borders – depends heavily on consumers' active participation […] convergence represents a cultural shift as consumers are encouraged to seek out new

287 Lovink, Geert, 13.

information and make connections among dispersed media content."[288]

As participatory media, the Internet creates the expectation for users to act not just as consumers (as under a broadcast model) but as producers as well. If the dominance of the Internet (and social media devices) provides the model for both power and truth for Occupy, then it makes sense that a wide variety of different narratives can find traction within the movement. In the second part of my analysis I will expand on this discussion by looking at how the 99% is distinguished from its enemy (corporations) through a logic of authenticity rather than fidelity, which is often expressed as a desire to escape the regime of mass representations in favor of individual expression.

The third aspect of the Internet that influences Occupy is an outcome of its nature as a network of information in which communities are formed. Cass Sunstein argues that the potential for the Internet to actualize the promise of a free public square in which ideas are exchanged is undermined by the way information is filtered and community is formed through our online identities: "Self insulation and personalization are solutions to some genuine problems, but they also spread falsehoods, and promote polarization and fragmentation."[289] As Sunstein and other media critics observe, the way the Internet has developed allows us to control the sorting of information through "filter bubbles" that in turn may create "echo chambers" in which the tendency toward confirmation bias is reinforced by selective exposure. The process of decision-making for Occupy literally makes the general assemblies into an embodiment of online echo

288 Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide,* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2008), 3.

289 Cass R. Sunstein, *#Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media* (Princeton University Press, 2017).

chambers in physical space. The human microphone (repetition of messages by everyone present) and the requirement for consensus may undermine their attempt to flatten hierarchy through the rejection of representation because these processes revert to a norm of identity over difference.

Occupy embodies the ideal of user-generated content in its organizational principles. Online services such as Facebook and Twitter provide a platform through which users disseminate their own content. Computers, tablets, and smartphones are designed to run a variety of software and process diverse data, but each of these systems has an underlying operating system. The operating systems for these devices consist of the user interface (the desktop for computers, home screen for phones and tablets) through which we interact with the system, and the kernel or core that manages the distribution of resources within the device. In the next section, I analyze how the process of Occupy serves to disseminate multiple narratives around a unified core.

ANALYSIS: OCCUPY OS

Many were attracted to Occupy because it seemed to offer a way of linking their own struggles to the larger economic crisis that reached a crescendo in 2008. Whether it was the Ron Paul fans who believed the problem was "crony capitalism" blocking the implementation of a true "free market," or leftists arguing that the crisis was a consequence of capitalism itself, most who joined Occupy would agree that the problem we face is that corporations exert power over the government to the detriment of the people, which manifests itself as vast income inequality, failures of the justice system, and a corrupt campaign finance system. In this section I discuss how the process that defined Occupy helped activists create meaning from their experience. My

presentation of this analysis follows the pattern I used in the previous case study, in this case with the first two parts dealing with the "user interface" of Occupy as they focus on the input and output of the movement, and a final analysis of the internal mechanisms or "kernel" (processing) of the movement. First, I discuss how Occupy describes the crisis by using the signifier "the 99%" to unite diverse experience of the failure of the American Dream. Next, I analyze the demands that the movement produced, which articulate a people defined by "authentic" human relationships unmediated by corporations. Finally, I offer a critique of the structural criteria that Occupy used to mark their territory through a dependence on consensus as the organizing principle, which brings a movement defined by its diversity back under the dominion of identity. As a movement built on the logic of the Internet, Occupy promised its users/activists a way to escape the failure of corporations to produce meaningful representations by making their own meanings.

It should be no surprise that a movement with the support of "hacktivist" collective Anonymous would promise the possibility of rewriting the codes through which our society operates. One of the outcomes of Occupy was the production of several different guidebooks that offer themselves as toolkits activists can use to create messages, plan actions, and "hack" the system.[290] One example is especially interesting for its translation of concepts from critical theory: *Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution*, "assembled" by Andrew Boyd.[291] This book includes a series of tactics, principles, and theories that can be used to resist the hegemonic

[290] See, for example: Janet Byrne, *The Occupy Handbook*, (New York: Back Bay Books, 2012). and Sarah van Gelder and the staff of YES! Magazine, eds, *This Changes Everything: Occupy Wall Street and the 99% Movement*, (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2011).

291 Andrew Boyd and Dave Oswald Mitchell, *Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution*, (New York: OR Books, 2012).

forces of neoliberal late capitalism, patriarchy, racism, and heterosexism. Two of the concepts are especially important to Occupy's response to the economic crisis of 2008 and the continuing problem of income inequality: "floating signifiers" and "memes."

In *Beautiful Trouble's* summary of the "floating signifier," the debt to Ernesto Laclau is explicitly acknowledged, although the subtle difference between a "floating signifier" and an "empty signifier" in Laclau's work is somewhat lost. The concept is defined thusly: "An empty or 'floating' signifier is a symbol or concept loose enough to mean many things to many people, yet specific enough to galvanize action in a particular direction."[292] Close enough; Laclau describes these signifiers with the distinction that the empty signifier is a way of orienting a collective identity within a group and a floating signifier is up for contestation between rival blocs in hegemonic struggle.[293] In a way, the economic crisis of 2008 serves as a floating signifier that different political groups fight over for the right to define, while the "99 Percent" the handbook uses as an example of the "floating signifier" in *Beautiful Trouble* would more aptly called an empty signifier because it is the polysemous point of solidarity for those within the movement. These distinctions aside, the observation that "[o]ne might even argue that broad social movements are constituted in the act of finding their floating signifier"[294] is astute and points to the role of these struggles over meaning in linking activists to become a tribe. In other words, as symbols that don't have a stable referent in the world, the act of producing meanings for these signifiers can create affective alliances to enact social change.

The next concept describes how the new meanings produced by the movement spread.

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[292] Smucker, Jonathan Matthew; Body, Andrew; and Mitchell, Dave Oswald. In *Andrew Boyd and Dave Oswald Mitchell, Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution, (New York: OR Books, 2012).* 234.
[293] Laclau, 135.
[294] Smucker, Boyd, Mitchell, 234.

Richard Dawkins's idea of "memes" is an analogy to genetics for cultural evolution: "A meme is like a piece of cultural DNA that evolves as it passes from person to person."[295] The term has entered the popular lexicon as bit of pop culture that spread through the Internet such as pictures of Ryan Gosling ("Hey Girl,") or a (grumpy) cat that you may see on your Facebook feed, but it is important for this form of activism because it is identified as a type of "cultural virus" that mutates and spreads, helping disseminate messages. These messages are especially affective if they can form narratives that resonate with our own experiences: "Human beings are literally hardwired for narrative. Stories are the threads of our lives and weave together to form the fabric of human cultures."[296] The authors point out that what matters to a narrative is not "the truth," but rather meaning, and that it is through the control over production of these meanings that power is often exerted. Taking these concepts together, we can see a theoretical basis within the movement itself for the use of narratives as a means of producing affective alliances as individual experiences of hardship are linked to a common symbolic identity. So what are the memes Occupy spread to create meanings around the floating signifier of the "economic crisis of 2008"?

The Crisis: "We are the 99%" and the Failure of the American Dream

Occupy used memes to attract activists and link encampments across the country. The movement brought together diverse groups of people who were dissatisfied with the way that the economic crisis seemed to have been resolved without anyone being held accountable. As I mentioned before, at one extreme there are those who said that the crisis was staged by the secret

[295] Patrick Reinsborough and Doyle Canning, Doyle in *Beautiful Trouble,* 242.
[296] Reinsborough and Canning, 244.

cabal that controls world history (Illuminati, Freemasons, Aliens?).[297] Libertarians and fans of Ron Paul who were disappointed in the Tea Party's development into a wing of the Republican party joined Occupy to educate others about the evils of the Federal Reserve. Some were attracted to Occupy as a chance to bring attention to the culture of corruption throughout the financial system described by journalists like Matt Taibbi.[298] Others saw Occupy as a chance to engage in a systemic critique of capitalism to prepare for the ultimate revolution. What these and other versions of the story have in common is the agreement that the flaws in the system exemplified in the economic crisis make the American Dream unattainable for most people. Occupy responded to the crisis of representation by rejecting representation as the basis for affiliation, instead making entry into the movement a matter of affective alliances.

Occupy used the meme "We are the 99 Percent" to invite audiences to share their own experiences of being affected by the economic crisis. The details of the stories differed, but the feelings evoked by these narratives shared a resonance that may have motivated people to see their own problems as part of a larger system that disadvantaged most people to benefit a small minority. This expression of solidary became a way that citizens could interface with the movement and link to others who were similarly affected. If we look at Occupy as an operating system, the signifier "99 Percent" was the password that allowed activists to access the system and input their own experiences. Many who identified with Occupy created posts labeling

[297] I did not see that this was a major thread during my research on Occupy, but if you unpack the theories about the New World Order there is a tendency to trace the conspiracy to the European banking family "The Rothschilds," who are Jewish and so there is sometimes a link between these theories and anti-Semitism.

[298] Matt Taibbi, *Griftopia: Bubble Machines, Vampire Squids, and the Long Con That Is Breaking America*, (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2010).

themselves as the "99 Percent" that were collected on the website Tumblr, which is a kind of blogging platform that incorporates the more visual aspects of social media.

The "We Are the 99 Percent" Tumblr account invites readers to create memes through which they can share their stories and disseminate the signifier "99 Percent." These stories take experiences of desperation, anger, fear, and despair and link them to the failure of the American Dream myth to faithfully represent the possibilities for most Americans. The invitation to participate starts by describing circumstances such as debt, eviction, and losing social programs to austerity and asks participants to "let the [one] percent know by taking part in the 99 Percent Project."[299] Participants are asked to make a sign that narrates their experience and write below it "I am the 99 percent" and then "Occupy Together," then take a picture of themselves to submit to the site. The claim is that this is a message to the one percent themselves, however, I think it is safe to say that the people who may be most impacted by these stories of debt, unemployment, home foreclosure, and hard work without just compensation are others who share similar experiences.

The images that were created illustrate how the "empty signifier" of the 99 Percent became a way of linking together individuals affected by the economic crisis into a tribe based on a feeling of solidarity in suffering rather than a common identity arranged around a unified set of ideas. As one browses the images on the site, it becomes clear that the original request for a single line describing the submitter's situation was quickly extended to a brief narrative that would fill one sheet of paper, with a wide range in handwritten or typed text of varying sizes. As

[299] "We Are the 99 Percent." *Tumblr.com*, accessed April 18, 2017. http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/?og=1.

a Tumblr account, individual posts are marked by "notes" showing that someone has commented on or shared an item, similar to "likes" and "comments" on Facebook. Over the past few years, the archive of posts has grown, as have the numbers of "notes" on various items. While some of the early images received only about a dozen notes, later images received hundreds (there is no indication of how many people simply viewed these posts, or shared them on other media such as Facebook or Twitter). Similarly, the style of these images changed over time.

The first image posted on September 8, 2011, just after the initial call for submissions, is strikingly simple: A person wearing a Guy Fawkes mask in a dark room holds a piece of cardboard that says "I AM A SLAVE TO DEBT – I AM 99%"[300] The Guy Fawkes mask has become famous as a symbol of protest through its use by members of the hacktavist collective Anonymous, who appropriated it from the *V for Vendetta* graphic novel and film adaptation.[301] While the mask serves to hide the identity of the person wearing it, it also creates as a point of collective identification for many activists as they try to embody the resistance to authority symbolized by the character V, whose solitary fight against an oppressive regime is able to inspire a revolution. As John Protevi observes, hiding one's face in these images might be a result of the shame induced by the narratives portrayed in which the person's situation may be internalized as a result of their own failure to live the American Dream.[302] This sense of shame is reinforced by the dark lighting and use of the term "slave," but at the same time this image serves to introduce one of the primary themes of the memes in this collection: The injustice of

[300] http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/post/9977558558

[301] Moore, Alan. *V for Vendetta*. New edition. New York: Vertigo, 2008. McTeigue, James. V for Vendetta. Warner Brothers, 2008.

[302] John Protevi, "Semantic, Pragmatic, and Affective Enactment at OWS," *Theory and Event,* vol 14, 4, (2011).

debt in contemporary capitalism. In tying personal debt to the "99 %" signifier, one may recognize that debt is never suffered in isolation but always as part of a larger system.

Another major theme of the 99% memes is following the rules without due reward, which is illustrated in an image from October 19, 2011: a woman holding a piece of paper that covers her face from the nose down and describes how she has "$40k in loans and minimal job prospects" as a recent college graduate who is pregnant and living from paycheck to paycheck with roommates.[303] She goes on to ask, "Is this the American Dream?" before identifying herself as one of the 99%. This story helps specify the source of debt for many Millennials: college loans at an increasing rate of interest. At the same time as a college education has become a necessity in today's world it has also ceased to be a competitive advantage as more and more young people incur debt to gain this necessary key to the middle class while also finding that the doors it would have opened for our parents have closed. In invoking the "American Dream," this narrative helps give meaning to the experience of desperation and betrayal that many young Americans feel when they find that the guarantee of prosperity as a reward for hard work is no longer certain.

Where the previous narrative laments the lost inheritance of the American Dream, a related example of affective affiliation is from March 29, 2012: a woman with headphones staring into the camera with a look that mixes mourning and determination and a sheet of paper that begins: "I CAN'T FIND MY FUTURE."[304] The lines that follow use a combination of anaphora and antithesis to dissolve the border between past and future in a perpetual present: "I

[303] http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/post/11682651266/lets-build-an-america-to-be-proud-of-for-my-son
[304] http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/post/20116769441/i-can-t-find-my-future-i-looked-in-college-i

looked…I found." As each of the institutions or relationships invoked ("college…parents…friends…land…fellow humans") provokes a sense of disappointment ("debt…heartbreak…sorrow…destroyed…NO ONE CARES ANYMORE"), these affects are linked in a series that encapsulates the grievances of the Occupy movement, providing multiple points of resonance. Despite the elegiac tone of this narrative, it abruptly shifts as the narrator turns the locus of agency from outside to herself: "well. I CARE. An awful lot. IM TAKING MY FUTURE BACK. (IT'S MINE)." In ending with the customary "I AM THE 99%," the narrator seems to attempt to shift from a tone of despair toward a tone of hope linked to a common cause.

As these memes proliferate, they help to break down borders in ways that are exemplified by a third example from April 2, 2012. In this image a young man expresses solidarity with the Occupy movement by staring directly into the camera and holding up a long note in which he relates his experience living in Denmark.[305] He starts by saying "IN DENMARK EVERYONE SEEMS TO BE THE 1%," before describing the social welfare system that offers health care and education to all citizens because of the higher rate of taxation. As he says "LIFE QUALITY IS SO GOOD HERE; IT IS EASY TO FORGET ABOUT POVERTY. FORCED HOMELESSNESS IS VIRTUALLY NON-EXISTENT. BUT WHEN I READ THE STORIES OF YOU GUYS IN THE USA, i'M [sic] REMINDED THAT JUST LIKE YOU, i [sic] AM STILL THE 99%" Written as a response to other posts on the site, this story offers hope that another system is possible. In offering a counter-narrative to the prevalent narrative of uncertainty while staring directly into the camera, this man's image provides a mirror in which the border between self and other can be dissolved as the viewer is invited to see that it isn't just

[305] http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/post/20345799407/even-though-i-am-still-the-99

despair that unites us, but hope as well.

This analysis shows how the "We are the 99 Percent" Tumblr uses memes to link together affective intensities to create meaning from shared experience. The "99 Percent" became a way of telling one's own unique story of the economic crisis while empathizing with those whose different experiences result in relatable feelings. While these narratives may help viewers recognize that they are not alone in their suffering and that there is a larger system that makes these stories so ubiquitous, the use of the signifier "99 Percent" is not without its problems: being told that our experience is not unique, for example, could trigger resentment. As the comments on many of these memes show, some readers react to the affective entanglements the images induce by turning toward tropes of exceptionalism and personal responsibility, blaming those sharing their narratives for not properly playing their role in the system, and accusing them of producing their own problems. The reactive tendency to shift responsibility from the system toward the individual and push these issues out of the public sphere and back into the private domain shows that an attempt to introduce a "cultural virus" will be met by capitalism's immune system as the struggle for cultural hegemony endures. Still, despite the repression of Occupy protests around the country, their message continues to disseminate itself, and the effect of this shared affect may be yet to come.

Sharing memes about the failure of the American Dream may have gotten people interested in Occupy, but the goal was to get them physically involved in the movement. In this part of the analysis I have looked at how Occupy invited activists to tell their own stories as a way of both understanding the flaws in the current system, and developing a sense of identity as the 99% that has the agency to change this system. If we see Occupy as an operating system

designed to move us toward a non-hierarchal society, sharing memes about the crisis is the way activists can create their own content as a way of interfacing with the movement. Next, I will look at the output of Occupy as the set of demands that sets up the confrontation between the people and their enemy.

The People and Their Enemy: The Demand for Authenticity

Corporations are people, my friend. – Mitt Romney[306]

One of the misconceptions about Occupy was that they were never clear about their demands. In fact, they may have had too many demands. The original poster from Adbusters that invited people to occupy Wall Street on September 17, 2011 (the anniversary of the signing of the Constitution) had a simple question as its tagline: "What is our one demand?"[307] As a movement that embraced direct democracy through general assemblies in which members could vote on every decision, the requirement for consensus in effect gave every member veto power; it should be no surprise, therefore, that the diversity of activists who joined the movement may have made it more difficult for outsiders to see it as coherent. Resistance to producing a monolithic representation of the movement was built into the structure of Occupy. The question "what is our one demand?" may even be interpreted as playing with the idea of the politics of representation typical of social movements in which the movement presents their demands to an external authority in a quest for recognition. Occupy was more about expression than representation, but activists in the movement found affective affiliation through discussion of

306 "Mitt Romney Says 'corporations Are People,'" *Washington Post*, accessed April 18, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/mitt-romney-says-corporations-are-people/2011/08/11/gIQABwZ38I_story.html.

307 Jacquelyn Gleisner, "Adbusters_occupy-Wall-street2," *Art21 Magazine*, accessed July 7, 2017. http://magazine.art21.org/2011/12/29/top-10-memes-of-occupy-wall-street/adbusters_occupy-wall-street2/.

issues dealing with social and economic justice. Just as a user interface for an operating system includes modes of input and output, Occupy was designed to take input from its adherents and manifest a form of direct democracy to produce collective declarations.

One of the ironies of Occupy is that despite its claim to reject authority in any form, the process that David Graeber and others developed before the first general assembly at Zuccotti Park involved a small group setting rules for the movement, including that there would be no leaders. The most well-known structural aspects of Occupy are probably the human microphone and the general assembly, but Occupy also developed an elaborate system of working groups to handle problems from basic camp logistics, media relations, and generating a list of demands. As these working groups prepared drafts of documents, these drafts were posted online for comment. One of these documents was never officially approved by the general assembly but created a detailed list of demands that would have been made to the U.S. Congress including passing laws overturning the Citizen's United Supreme Court decision, restructuring the system for debt relief, and reforming the campaign finance system.[308] Another used the Constitution as a template for advocating a national general assembly that would in turn produce a definitive list of demands and directly engage in electoral politics to overturn the party system if those demands were not met.[309] The official statement adopted by the general assembly of New York at the end of September, 2011, may be the most direct use of populist rhetoric by the movement.

The "Declaration of the Occupation of New York City" is modeled on the Declaration of

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308 Occupy Wall Street, "Forum Post: DETAILED LIST OF DEMANDS & OVERVIEW OF TACTICS FOR DC PROTEST (Compiled from Suggestions Made in This Forum) -- Please Suggest Additions or Edits so I Can Propose This List to Those Keeping the Official One," *OccupyWallSt.org*, accessed April 18, 2017. https://occupywallst.org/forum/detailed-list-of-demands-overview-of-tactics-for-d/.

309 "The 99% Declaration," accessed April 18, 2017, http://www.the99declaration.org/home.

Independence and consists mostly of a list of grievances.[310] From the start, it is clear who is responsible for these crimes: "We write so that all people who feel wronged by the corporate forces of the world can know that we are your allies." It goes on to define "the people" as "the human race" from whom just government derives its power. According to the New York City assembly of Occupy, the problem is that "corporations, which place profit over people, self-interest over justice, and oppression over equality, run our governments." Occupy's demand is that political power be returned to individuals because "no true democracy is attainable when the process is determined by economic power." Because corporations exist to accumulate economic power, their ability to exert that power in the political arena is a direct threat to democracy as the distribution of power equally among the people. The difference between this rhetoric of division and the image of thought through which the Tea Party distinguish the "true" people from the "false" is that rather than claim authority according to their fidelity to representations (interpretation), Occupy rejects the authority of representations over the people. In other words, Occupy advocates vesting sovereignty in the individual rather than the collective representation of individuals in the legal fiction of the corporation.

As valid as the NYC assembly's analysis of the situation may have been, their logic began to break down at the point when the requirement to produce a demand meant engaging in a politics of representation that the tribe had explicitly defined themselves against. This flaw may have been built into the assumptions upon which the movement was based. Travis Mushett, who participated in Occupy during his time as a graduate student at Columbia University, argues that

310 Occupy Wall Street,"Forum Post: First OFFICIAL Release from OCCUPY WALL STREET | OccupyWallSt.org," accessed April 18, 2017. https://occupywallst.org/forum/first-official-release-from-occupy-wall-street/.

Occupy was an attempt to create a "politics of authenticity."[311] He traces the inspiration for Occupy to the philosophy behind the Situationist movement, which is exemplified in Guy Debord's manifesto *Society of the Spectacle*. According to Debord, consumer culture enslaves society to the seduction of images that make a meaningful life impossible: "Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation."[312] Debord's version of the critique of representation is a return to the image of thought expressed in Plato's Cave allegory: because the images fail to faithfully represent reality they produce false consciousness and so to attain true consciousness we must escape the regime of representation.

Mushett expresses this logic well when he argues that part of what motivated the physical encampment of Occupy was an attempt to escape a world dominated by the media and create a politics of authenticity based on direct relationships between people: "Occupy was also a revolt against mediation, authenticity's mirror image. It opposed any person or institution standing between the individual and direct engagement with others and with the world."[313] Although Mushett acknowledges that some mediation is necessary as language itself is a form of mediation, he advocates the politics of authenticity as a way of escaping the regime of representation. The problem with this logic may be best illustrated by the example that Jean Baudrillard begins with in his version of the critique of representation in *Simulacra and Simulation.*[314]

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311 Travis Mushell, *Authentic Occupy*, ed. Thought Catalog. (Thought Catalog, 2013). Kindle Edition

312 Guy Debord, "Society of the Spectacle." Accessed April 18, 2017. https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/debord/society.htm.

313 Mushett, Kindle location 118-120.

314 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

On the first page of *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard discusses a story by Jorge Luis Borges in which "cartographers of the Empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up covering the territory exactly."[315] Over time, this map begins to fade so that the real world becomes visible beneath it. Baudrillard's argument is that our media system has created a world in which the opposite is true: the real world has faded so our experience is of a map that has no external reference: "today it is the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map. It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges persist here and there in the deserts that are no longer those of the Empire, but ours. *The desert of the real itself."*[316] Reading Baudrillard with Deleuze, Occupy's rejection of the politics of representation depends upon a logic in which the only acceptable map would be one that is identical to the territory. In short, if Occupy is an attempt to create an "authentic" politics that escapes mediation, how can it translate the diverse desires of its membership into a coherent demand? On what basis can Occupy claim to represent its membership when membership depends on a rejection of representation? In the next section, I conclude my analysis with a discussion of how this privileging of identity over difference was built into the process through which the movement made decisions.

THE TERRITORY OF OCCUPY AND THE POLITICS OF PRESENCE

The tribe of Occupy created a physical territory through the literal occupation of public spaces. Occupy was organized as a place in which direct democracy could be realized. As Castells argues, the message of Occupy was the process itself.[317] The purpose of this direct democratic action was to deliberate on possible futures in which the tribe could escape the

315 Baudrillard, 1.
316 Baudrillard, 1.
317 Castells, 185.

tyranny of representation embodied in late capitalism through the corporation. As I have argued, Occupy acts as an operating system in its use of affective alliances to solicit input, and the production of a demand as the output. In the encampments, Occupy extends the metaphor a little further by creating what programmers call a "sandbox" or "virtual machine" in which programs can be tested in isolation from the larger system. To conclude this analysis, I offer a critique of the kernel of this operating system in the processes through which Occupy made decisions.

As I mentioned earlier, before the encampments started there were a series of organizing meetings during which the basic structure and principles of the movement were decided. As David Graeber explains, these rules were inspired by anarchist principles that include a rejection of authority and an attempt to do without hierarchy. Key to this attempt to create a leaderless movement was the creation of criteria by which decisions would be made: "From the very beginning, too, organisers made the audacious decision to operate not only by direct democracy, without leaders, but by consensus. The first decision ensured that there would be no formal leadership structure that could be co-opted or coerced; the second, that no majority could bend a minority to its will, but that all crucial decisions had to be made by general consent."[318] In the original encampment in New York City as well as its affiliates around the world this process manifested itself in two ways: the human microphone and general assembly.

Of course, the human microphone developed from the necessity to amplify voices in an environment where use of loudspeakers was banned. Observers may be struck by the eerie effect of hearing a single voice repeated in small chains of words by a larger crowd.[319] In a way, this is

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318 Graeber, paragraph 11.

319 When I first saw it I thought of the Borg from *Start Trek: The Next Generation.*

a material version of Twitter in which small blocks of text are spread through "retweets." There is an important difference between the human microphone and Twitter, however: On Twitter, retweets are often used as a way of commenting on and modifying what has been said by others. In the human microphone, participants were expected to repeat the same words that they heard without any modification. This repetition-without-a-difference may have had the ephemeral effect of undermining the claim to eschew authority by granting individual voices temporary power over the discourse of the community. In practical terms, this meant that participants who were driven by a systemic critique of capitalism may have found themselves repeating conspiracy theories about the New World Order, and advocates of an expanded social welfare system may have intoned tirades against taxes. The necessity of developing a process to organize speakers was another way that hierarchy was able to leak back into Occupy, as giving some speakers the time to speak inherently means not giving that time to others. The re-creation of hierarchy was even more apparent in the insistence on consensus as the criteria for decision-making in the assembly.

In the general assemblies, Occupy allowed members a chance to see direct democracy in action as everyone was invited to participate in discussions, debates, and decision-making. Members of the assembly developed an elaborate system of hand gestures to indicate whether they liked or disliked what was being said, but the ultimate gesture was the "block" in which members would cross their arms above their head (think of the "moment of hate" in Michael Radford's adaptation of *1984*) to indicate that their disagreement with the proposition being

discussed was too strong to be overcome.[320] In these cases, consensus could not be reached and so the proposal could not move forward. Over time, the requirement for consensus was weakened slightly from complete agreement to a standard of 90%, and members reported that social pressure kept them from abusing the power of individual veto in the form of the block. This demand for consensus was one of the reasons that it was difficult for the group to officially approve many of the drafts of demands that committees had created.

The ideal of consensus submits differences in perspective to the authority of the same. Imposing consensus as the standard for decision-making has obvious problems when the group's claim to reject hierarchy includes embracing diverse points of view and avoiding an official leadership. By imposing these principles on the movement, the anarchist faction in effect created a hierarchy in which they served as the leadership by insisting that true democracy depends on accordance with their model. In other words, the only way achieve consensus was by defaulting to the dogmatic image of thought in which identity is privileged over difference. As a specific example, when some members proposed creating a list of demands to present to congress, the general assembly of New York rejected it because it would not be faithful to their ideal of not recognizing external authorities.[321] The problem here was not that Occupy failed to live up to its ideal of direct democracy, but that imposing the requirement to be faithful to the ideal creates a system of interpretive authority. In rejecting external authority, the anarchist code written into the process of Occupy was a way of reinforcing the logic of representation in which actual

320 Michael Radford, dir. *1984*. MGM/UA Home Entertainment, 1984.

321 "Occupy Wall Street Doesn't Endorse Philly Conference," *NPR.org*, accessed July 7, 2017, http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2012/02/24/147349639/occupy-wall-street-doesnt-endorse-philly-conference.

politics is set in opposition to virtual democracy.

In their attempt to embody direct democracy, Occupy relied on what Jacques Derrida (following Martin Heidegger) called "the metaphysics of presence." Conceptually, my understanding of Derrida's critique resonates with Deleuze's critique of representation that has been the driving force behind my argument: the metaphysics of presence privileges (physical) presence, the (temporal) present, the immediate, the ready-to-hand, to the exclusion of absence, the past and future, and alterity. In one of Derrida's discussions of Husserl's phenomenology, he links this critique to what I would call a desire for mastery:

> That is, about the unity of sense and the word in the "is": which in principle could promise the recasting of all language only by having already, teleologically, promised all sense to meaning. And about the relations between the *is*, within *self-evidence itself*, that we find proposed all of transcendental phenomenology seen at its most ambitious, proposing both to constitute an absolutely *formal* logic and ontology, and to provide a transcendental description of self *presence* or of original consciousness.[322]

The tendency to reduce all reality to our immediate sense of it in the metaphysics of presence carries with it the promise that our consciousness *of* the world *is* the world – or that there is the possibility of absolute identity between our perception or representation of the world and the world as it actually exists.

In practical terms, the application of Derrida's observations to Occupy is fairly simple: the requirement of participation in the process of Occupy meant that only those who were present either physically or at least online counted as part of "the 99%" or the people that Occupy claimed to be identical to. In order to embody direct democracy, Occupy had to exclude the majority of Americans from the process, and had to reject any principle of demand politics or

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322 Jacques Derrida, Jacques, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1985), 172.

representation to maintain mastery or agency that would have been – and ultimately was – upset by the type of disagreement that is essential to democratic discourse in which diverse interests engage with one another. Graeber's fantasy of a society built on immediate agreements between free-associating individuals without any imposition of authority is one in which agency depends on reducing reality to the here and now. And it may be that this fantasy of absolute mastery over the present is reinforced by contemporary technology: As a 2012 study by Pew Research Center shows, among millennials who are active users of the Internet there is a tendency to be present-oriented as a way of coping with the massive influx of information.[323] Ultimately, it was the desire for authentic relationships without external mediation and the compulsion to consensus that challenged Occupy's ability to engage with those outside the encampments.

The problem that Occupy faced was that by embracing a logic of authenticity in which representations should be rejected because of their failure to ever be complete, participation in the existing republican system of government became difficult. The typical strategy of social movements mediating the conflict between diverse individuals and an existing authority is not possible if the ideal of the movement is a world without mediation. This flaw does not mean that Occupy failed, however. The election of 2016 shows that Occupy had an influence on public discussion of income inequality, and the movement developed tactics that are still having an impact on the larger culture. The failure of Occupy to engage in electoral politics in the same way as the Tea Party shows that the success of virtual movements depends on their ability to actualize change within the larger culture, and in the end it may be Occupy's vision of the people

323 Janna Anderson and Lee Rainie, "Main Findings: Teens, Technology, and Human Potential in 2020," *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech*, February 29, 2012. http://www.pewinternet.org/2012/02/29/main-findings-teens-technology-and-human-potential-in-2020/.

reclaiming power from the corporations that prevails.

Conclusion: Making America Great Again

Reality TV star Donald Trump was elected president of the United States in 2016. In his inaugural address, Trump claimed to be "transferring power from Washington, D.C., and giving it back to you, the people."[324] Within the first month, Trump took a theme from his campaign a step further when he identified the media as "the enemy of the people."[325] Trump's frequent use of populist tropes and his reliance on a base of support that has become increasingly hostile to academics and media experts alike adds an exigency to my project as an analysis of the conditions that made Trump's victory possible. My focus in this dissertation has been the relationship between populism and media. I have described the contemporary populist movements of the Tea Party and Occupy as tribes that establish territories to expand or contract the range of acceptable political discourse as they contend for hegemony. In 2016, these tribes played a significant role in the presidential election.

As I was working on this project during the campaign, I was struck by how many of the themes that surfaced in the Tea Party and Occupy were taken up by candidates of both major parties. On the Democratic side, presumed nominee Hillary Clinton faced a serious challenge from Vermont senator Bernie Sanders, who describes himself as a

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[324] Donald Trump, "Trump Inauguration: Transcript of Donald Trump Speech," *Time.com*, accessed July 18, 2017. http://time.com/4640707/donald-trump-inauguration-speech-transcript/.

[325] Andrew Higgins, "Trump Embraces 'Enemy of the People,' a Phrase with a Fraught History," *The New York Times*, February 26, 2017, sec. Europe, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/26/world/europe/trump-enemy-of-the-people-stalin.html.

democratic socialist. His campaign announcement could have gotten approval from the general assembly of Occupy Wall Street: "Today, we stand here and say loudly and clearly that; 'Enough is enough. This great nation and its government belong to all of the people, and not to a handful of billionaires, their Super-PACs and their lobbyists.'"[326] The issues he campaigned on were wealth inequality, climate change, campaign finance reform, and universal health care. To be clear, Sanders had been advocating his positions for decades, but they resonated with the issues raised by Occupy. We have no way of knowing for certain, but it seems fair to speculate that by making wealth inequality a central issue in American politics, Occupy paved the way for Bernie Sanders becoming such an important figure.[327]

Donald Trump's rise to political prominence began in 2011 with his assertion that Barack Obama had not produced his birth certificate to prove his eligibility for the presidency, which was a popular belief among Tea Party advocates.[328] Trump was a supporter of the Tea Party and spoke at a rally in Florida in 2011, during which he

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326 "Bernie's Announcement." *Bernie Sanders*, May 26, 2015. https://berniesanders.com/bernies-announcement/.

327 Only three people in U.S. history have gotten more primary votes than Bernie Sanders: Donald Trump (slightly), Barack Obama, and Hillary Clinton (twice). To be direct about it: can we imagine an America in which a Jewish socialist would get so much traction if not for the Occupy Movement? For vote totals see: Drew DeSilver, "Turnout Was High in the 2016 Primary Season, but Just Short of 2008 Record," *Pew Research Center*, June 10, 2016. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/06/10/turnout-was-high-in-the-2016-primary-season-but-just-short-of-2008-record/.

328 Seamus McGraw, "Trump: I Have 'real Doubts' Obama Was Born in U.S.," *TODAY.com*, April 7, 2011. http://www.today.com/id/42469703/ns/today-today_news/t/trump-i-have-real-doubts-obama-was-born-us/.

For an example of polling on Tea Party beliefs about Obama's citizenship see: Stephanie Condon CBS News April, 2011, and 8:05 Pm. "Poll: One in Four Americans Think Obama Was Not Born in U.S." Accessed April 19, 2017. http://www.cbsnews.com/news/poll-one-in-four-americans-think-obama-was-not-born-in-us/.

Barack Obama was born in Hawaii. Trump had previously floated a run for president, but had never gotten beyond the stage of an exploratory committee.

previewed many of the issues he would later campaign on including immigration, terrorism, and international trade.[329] His campaign slogan borrowed from Reagan's 1980 campaign: "Make America Great Again."[330] The link between Trump and the Tea Party is so clear that after the election, Tea Party Patriots co-founder Jenny Beth Martin wrote an editorial for Foxnews.com in which she claims that Trump owes his surprise victory to the movement.[331]

There have many attempts to understand how Trump overcame the prediction models and pundits to beat Hillary Clinton. Immediately after the results came in, political commentators began spreading the talking point that the polls had been wrong, and this claim continues to be repeated in conservative media as a reason to distrust experts, but Clinton's approximately 3-million-vote advantage in the final popular vote was roughly consistent with what national polls projected.[332] According to prediction guru Nate Silver, when former FBI director James Comey sent a letter to congress on

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329 Quintin Sowinski. *Donald Trump Boca Raton, FL 4-16-11 Obama*, accessed April 19, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_mEt4DOPej4.

330 "How Donald Trump Came up with 'Make America Great Again,'" *Washington Post*, accessed April 19, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/how-donald-trump-came-up-with-make-america-great-again/2017/01/17/fb6acf5e-dbf7-11e6-ad42-f3375f271c9c_story.html.

331 Jenny Beth Martin, "How the Tea Party Helped Trump Win the Election," *FoxNews.com*, November 12, 2016, http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2016/11/12/how-tea-party-helped-trump-win-election.html.

332 Sean Trende, "It Wasn't the Polls That Missed, It Was the Pundits," *RealClearPolitics*, accessed July 12, 2017, http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2016/11/12/it_wasnt_the_polls_that_missed_it_was_the_pundits_132333.html.

According to Sean Trende of *RealClearPolitics*, the national polls were slightly more accurate in 2016 than in 2012, but the issue is that in our system of the electoral college the lack of reliable state polling date made it harder to predict which way key states would swing in close races. Likewise, there is debate about the role turnout played in the election, as well as voter-suppression efforts in key states. In my opinion, attempts to make it harder to vote for certain populations in swing states is something that needs to be considered, as many of the states that Obama had previously won and Trump took had been targeted by GOP efforts to rewrite voting laws.

October 28, 2016 indicating that the investigation into Clinton's use of a private email server during her time as secretary of state had been re-opened and congressional Republicans immediately leaked it, Clinton's poll numbers showed a drop significant enough to account for her losses in the key states of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania.[333] In the months after the election, whenever Clinton discussed the reasons for the outcome, a chorus rained blame on her, demanding that she take responsibility for being a bad candidate or for not campaigning enough in the aforementioned key states.[334] Trump's appeal to the rhetoric of culture war has led some, including Clinton herself, to argue that sexism or backlash against Obama may have been an important factor.[335] As if to avoid any self-reflection, one of the trends of 2017 has been journalists seeking out Trump voters to write profiles with the aim of helping liberals empathize with the resentment of those who seem to have been left behind by economic and cultural changes.[336] Despite these attempts to reach out to individual Trump voters, the difference

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333 Nate Silver, Nate, "The Comey Letter Probably Cost Clinton The Election," *FiveThirtyEight*, May 3, 2017, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-comey-letter-probably-cost-clinton-the-election/.

334 Pamela Engel, "New Book Suggests Hillary Clinton Blamed Everyone but Herself for Her Humiliating Defeat to Trump," *Business Insider*, accessed July 13, 2017, http://www.businessinsider.com/hillary-clinton-blame-for-election-loss-to-trump-2017-4.

335 Carl Bialik, "How Unconscious Sexism Could Help Explain Trump's Win," *FiveThirtyEight*, January 21, 2017. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-unconscious-sexism-could-help-explain-trumps-win/. Rebecca Onion, "Bad News: We're Sexist," *Slate*, June 7, 2017. http://www.slate.com/articles/double_x/doublex/2017/06/new_research_on_role_of_sexism_in_2016_election.html.; Thomas Wood, "Analysis | Racism Motivated Trump Voters More than Authoritarianism," *Washington Post*, April 17, 2017, sec. Monkey Cage Analysis, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/04/17/racism-motivated-trump-voters-more-than-authoritarianism-or-income-inequality/.

336 Henry Jonsson and Patrick Gass, "Among Trump Voters, Is There a Tipping Point?" *Christian Science Monitor*, July 12, 2017. https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2017/0712/Among-Trump-voters-is-there-a-tipping-point; Nicholas Kristof, "Opinion | In Trump Country, Shock at Trump Budget Cuts, but Still Loyalty," *The New York Times*, April 1, 2017, sec. Opinion.

in states that decided the electoral college was approximately 77,000 votes; the media imperative to assert a singular cause seems misplaced without a more comprehensive study.

One factor in the 2016 election that may be especially relevant to this project is under investigation at the time of this writing: according to U.S. intelligence services, hackers traced to Russia broke into the email systems of the Democratic National Committee and members of the Clinton campaign; they then released that information at key points during the campaign.[337] Additionally, social media were swamped with "fake news" sites that targeted Trump voters (as well as supporters of Bernie Sanders, and Green Party candidate Jill Stein) with fabricated stories that reinforced a negative disposition toward Hillary Clinton, some of which were allegedly done as part of a Russian disinformation campaign and some of which were even created by Clinton supporters as a way to make money.[338] After the election, Trump appropriated the term "fake news" to refer to mainstream media that published stories critical of him or his

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https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/01/opinion/sunday/in-trump-country-shock-at-trump-budget-cuts-but-still-loyalty.html.

The stereotype of the Trump voter is that they are white and working-class, but analysis shows that most Trump voters were more affluent than the average U.S. American. See: Nicholas Carnes and Noam Lupu, "Analysis | It's Time to Bust the Myth: Most Trump Voters Were Not Working Class," *Washington Post*, June 5, 2017, sec. Monkey Cage Analysis. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/06/05/its-time-to-bust-the-myth-most-trump-voters-were-not-working-class/.

337 "The Intelligence Community Report on Russian Activities in the 2016 Election," *Washington Post*, accessed July 14, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/apps/g/page/politics/the-intelligence-community-report-on-russian-activities-in-the-2016-election/2153/.

338 "Clinton Watts Senate Intelligence Committee Hearing | C-SPAN.org," *CSPAN.org*, accessed July 14, 2017, https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4664379/clinton-watts-senate-intelligence-committee-hearing.

Ryan Grim and Jason Cherkis. "Bernie Sanders' Campaign Faced A Fake News Tsunami. Where Did It Come From?" *Huffington Post*, March 11, 2017, sec. Politics, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/bernie-sanders-fake-news-russia_us_58c34d97e4b0ed71826cdb36.

Samath Subramanian, "Meet the Macedonian Teens Who Mastered Fake News and Corrupted the US Election," *WIRED*, accessed July 14, 2017, https://www.wired.com/2017/02/veles-macedonia-fake-news/.

administration. In Trump's America, total falsehoods are upheld as true without any external confirmation, and legitimate news sources are dismissed in accordance with one's tribal identification.

Donald Trump's presidency is the culmination of years of partisans fomenting distrust toward traditional authorities in the information environment of the United States. In August of 2016, Hillary Clinton gave a speech in which she warned about the rising influence of Breitbart.com and conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, as these and other fringe outlets promoted the Trump campaign.[339] Clinton lamented that Trump's candidacy was celebrated by the so-called "alt-right," an online community that is largely united by the practice of "trolling" or saying offensive things to elicit a reaction from others. The Southern Poverty Law Center defines the Alt-Right as a kind of rebranding of white supremacy, and indeed many prominent voices in the movement embrace theories of racial hierarchy in which either pseudoscientific genetic theories or cultural identity are determining factors. Even so, the Internet culture from which the Alt-Right is formed is defined as much--if not more--by a type of fragile/toxic masculinity that yearns for a

339 Hillary Clinton, "Hillary Clinton's Alt-Right Speech, Annotated - The Washington Post," *The Washington Post*, accessed July 18, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/08/25/hillary-clintons-alt-right-speech-annotated/?utm_term=.7ca20d40905b.
Alex Jones's support for Trump was especially strange to me. I have studied conspiracy theory rhetoric and Alex Jones was a big part of my master's thesis. Briefly, Jones is a leading advocate of theories that a "New World Order" secretly controls everything. After 9/11, he claimed it was an "inside job" designed to make it easier for George W. Bush to suspend democracy and impose martial law. When Obama became president in a normal election, the story became that he was just the new puppet of the New World Order. What confuses me is this: if I were a member of a secret cabal trying to manipulate the masses and wanted a puppet candidate to get people to think power had been returned for them, the first thing I would try to do is get a reality tv host elected president.

return to old form of patriarchy.[340] The Alt-Right merits more study; my focus on the relationship between identity and media would be useful to such a study.

In this dissertation, I synthesized and expanded upon insights from political science and the study of social movements, focusing particularly on the role of media in shaping our perceptions of public life. My approach links the ancient rhetorical concepts of invention and ethos to explicate how Aristotle's "available means of persuasion in a given situation" are defined by context and the articulation of an audience to a tribal identity.[341] Media technologies, as extensions of our senses, shape the way we come to understand our political reality and with so many sources, a shared tribal identity has become a heuristic for speaker credibility. To these ends I relied on Deleuze's critique of the dogmatic image of thought to interrogate the crises of representation that serve as a catalyst for populist movements, as well as the reliance on populist tropes as a response that attempts to reassert a claim to sovereignty. This approach is useful because it requires us to take technology seriously as part of the situation in which rhetorical events happen, moving beyond models that tend to ignore technology or see it simply as a conduit for information that rational actors will use to make political choices. To help bring this study to a (temporary) close, I will revisit the research questions that drove my analysis and summarize my findings, discuss my project's limitations and potential for future research, and consider the implications of my study.

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340 "Alternative Right," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, accessed July 18, 2017. https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/alternative-right.

341 Aristotle, "Book I - Chapter 2 : Aristotle's Rhetoric." Accessed July 18, 2017. http://rhetoric.eserver.org/aristotle/rhet1-2.html.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND FINDINGS:

RQ1: What are the narratives these groups construct as a response to the economic crisis, and how do these narratives create virtual territories in our political discourse?

My approach to analyzing the narratives of these movements relies on combining insights from the study of populist rhetoric, especially Laclau's theory of populist reason as an extension of hegemony theory, with Walter Fisher's theory of narrative rationality.[342] I focus on narratives because according to Laclau, populist movements are a response to a crisis of representation and one of the essential functions of these movements is to create consensus (common sense) through shared meanings. In other words, the movements create an interpretative framework that activists can use to make sense of their political world. The stories these movements tell about the crisis, themselves, their enemies, and their goals provide an explanation of the political environment that social movements are created to change and I developed a modification of Kenneth Burke's Pentad to analyze these elements. My analysis began with an examination of these elements in the rhetoric of the Tea Party as it coalesced into a movement to actualize an idealized past.

The Tea Party narrative was that the 2008 economic crisis was a result of illegitimate government intervention in the economy. Members of the Tea Party were

342 Walter R Fisher, "NARRATION AS A HUMAN COMMUNICATION PARADIGM: THE CASE OF PUBLIC MORAL ARGUMENT." *Communication Monographs* 51, no. 1:1.
Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, (London: Verso, 2007).

called to restore fidelity to the Constitution by advocating the free market as the legitimate means of manifesting the ideals that inspired the foundation of the country. The Tea Party narrative gives the Constitution a level of authority that is nearly infallible, contracting the range of acceptable discourse according to whether those speaking are faithful to the conservative interpretation. Their interpretation of the Constitution imposes an imaginary barrier between the good free market and the bad government, which is undone by their contention that to restore the free market they must take control of the government. The discord between the ideal of the free market and the reality of the contemporary economy motivates the Tea Party to actualize their ideal through a return to a virtual past in which frictionless capitalism solved all problems. The impossibility of returning to a past that never existed inoculates adherents against doubt, because any problems in the real world can be attributed to a failure to fully actualize their virtual territory. In attempting to limit legitimate discourse to those who share the common sense of the movement, the Tea Party responded to the crisis of representation by rejecting the agonism that is key to democracy. The fantasy that unites the Tea Party is one in which popular sovereignty is determined by fidelity to their ideal of American identity, and the crisis that created the movement was one in which the reality of others got in the way of unrestrained agency. In Occupy Wall Street, this desire for unrestrained agency takes a slightly different form.

Members of Occupy had multiple narratives of the economic crisis that were united around the common theme that the power of corporations has undermined the right of human people to pursue the American Dream. Occupy expanded the range of

acceptable discourse by not imposing a single interpretation or solution, but rather by producing a unified process through which a community could deliberate. Occupy created encampments in actual spaces around the country to give activists a place to imagine how they may address the problems of the past by changing the way power is distributed in the future. Activists in the Occupy movement experimented with alternative forms of democratic and economic organization. Once the movement brought these experiments to the larger world they ran into resistance, which was complicated by Occupy's rejection of representation. The narrative of Occupy created an opposition between their ideal of democracy and the actual practice of politics through representation in the United States. This discord between their ideal and reality motivated adherents to attempt to actualize the virtual territory of a future in which pure democracy overcomes external authority, hierarchy, and the accumulation of power in the hands of a few. In defining authentic democracy as a direct encounter between free agents who are expected to achieve consensus, Occupy relied on a metaphysics of presence—a fantasy of immediacy as the authentic experience of absolute meaning—that made articulating demands to those who were not present in the encampments themselves impossible. Despite Slavoj Žižek's warning not to fall in love with what they were doing, the occupations became idealized as the manifestation of the activists' interpretation of democracy in which individual agency is not constrained by outside authorities.

Both the Tea Party and Occupy responded to the crisis of representation brought about by the economic collapse of 2008 by giving adherents a way of asserting their agency against a system that has failed to adequately distribute sovereignty. My use of

narrative analysis for the study of populist rhetoric helps us to understand how shared meanings help articulate common identities. My theorization of virtual movements as tribes that use narratives to define their territories came about inductively as I immersed myself in the media of each of these movements. As I was doing my analysis of the Tea Party it occurred to me that much of their rhetoric was focused on the issue of fidelity in a way that seemed slightly different from Fisher's conception of narrative fidelity as the requirement that a narrative resemble an external reality. For the Tea Party, the crisis of representation was one in which the material world failed to adequately manifest their ideals. In other words, the ontology of the Tea Party is a kind of Platonism, and so this led me to think about Nietzsche and Deleuze's critique of Platonism as the foundation of a logic of representation in which either reality or representations are rejected for their failure to be identical to one another.

Occupy's response to the crisis of representation is to reject representation itself in favor of a rhetoric of "authenticity." In my observations of Occupy, I found that many activists were drawn to the movement for its promise of "real" relationships without any external mediation. The rejection of mediation complicated my comparison between the narratives of the Tea Party and Occupy. The Tea Party claimed to have a universal narrative that everyone should adhere to, but Occupy rejected the idea of a universal narrative that could adequately account for all individuals. Instead, what Occupy offered was a unified experience of the general assembly as a way of expressing consensus. In other words, in the encampments Occupy embodied their master narrative. Both movements provided a way to make sense out of the power imbalances that were laid

bare in the economic crisis, and as populist movements both articulated an identity against an enemy.

RQ2: How does each group differentiate the "true people" from their enemy?

In populist narratives, the failure of the people to manifest absolute agency is the result of the power of their enemies. My use of the populist frame as the overarching theoretical perspective for this study came from originally asking whether the common use of the term "populism" fit these movements. The rhetoric of division that distinguishes the people from their enemy is the defining criterion of populist rhetoric as discussed by Laclau and others. For the Tea Party, the claims to represent the people against an enemy were explicit in their acts of protest against various policies of the Obama administration. The enemy of Occupy was in their very name: Occupy *Wall Street.* Furthermore, Occupy claimed to embody direct democracy in opposition to the representational framework that is manifested in the legal fiction of "corporations are people." Because the trope "the people" is a metonymic substitution of those within the group for the whole of the population, invocation of populist rhetoric necessarily excludes those outside the group making the claim.

In populist rhetoric, the identity of the people depends upon defining an enemy. To answer my second research question I followed the example of Kenneth Burke in deploying the Populist Pentad discussed in chapter two, focusing on the ratio between the people and their enemy. This reading was informed by several related influences. First, the tendency to attribute all evils to an enemy who must be purged to resolve the crisis is a form of scapegoating. Aristotle, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung,

Melanie Klein, and Kenneth Burke have all theorized this process of purifying the community (or self) by projecting evil onto an other, but Burke's discussion of the rhetoric of identification and division was most relevant to my analysis because he provided a methodological model. Second, my understanding of this rhetoric of identification and division was informed by Deleuze's critique of the logic of representation as a system by which a true model is distinguished from a false copy according to their supposed resemblance or identity with a model. A dogmatic image of thought was clear in the Tea Party but also remained in Occupy (despite its claim to reject representation) in the definition of true democracy as only existing within various assemblies as they worked toward consensus.

Populist rhetoric uses a dogmatic image of thought as a way making meaning from the uncertainty induced by the experience of crisis. My reading of this logic of representation was informed by Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, as each binary created a hierarchy in which the supposed identity of the concept depends on its difference from its other. In my analysis I found that one of the motivations for these movements was an attempt to fix meanings that are ultimately undecidable as the border between the identity of the group and the difference of the other breaks down on closer examination. The Tea Party's opposition to government in favor of the free market required becoming the government because, in the U.S. system, at least, their ideal of a market acting independently of government is impossible. Occupy's claim to embody direct democracy in opposition to representation entails rejecting democratic discourse with those who do not submit to consensus. In both movements, the identity of the people can be divided

from their enemy according to resemblance (fidelity or authenticity) to a third term that is rhetorically constructed.

The Tea Party defines the people according to fidelity to their interpretation of the Constitution. For members of the Tea Party, the crisis of representation derives from the democratic process through which representatives are chosen in our republican form of government: they may be the minority, but their loss in elections is illegitimate because their interpretation of the Constitution makes them the true people from which government should derive its power. In other words, the Tea Party is "the Silent Majority" finding their voice.[343] The ideal leader for the Tea Party is Ronald Reagan, whose rhetoric articulated the government as the problem and the free market as the solution.

The Tea Party's identification with Reagan as the true heir to the ideals of the Constitution is protected by the ghost of Richard Nixon, whose paranoia manifests itself as a way to maintain tribal purity. The insistence on absolute fidelity to their interpretation of the Constitution creates a border between those whose legitimacy is conferred by their identity and the enemies who differ. The best way to prove fidelity is to hunt down those who differ and expel them from the tribe, as could be seen in the multiple occasions when the Tea Party turned on conservative politicians for any hint that they may compromise in the act of governing. The ultimate manifestation of this difference is Barack Obama, whose election was framed as an illegitimate attempt to take

343 Richard Nixon, "Nixon's Silent Majority Speech," accessed April 19, 2017. http://watergate.info/1969/11/03/nixons-silent-majority-speech.html.

power away from the people.

Occupy defines the people according to a logic of authenticity, in which the people are sorted from their enemy through their individuality. Members of Occupy claimed to reject representation as the basis of authority, and so the identity of "the people" was open to nearly everyone who accepted their equality. Corporations, as a legal representation of groups of people, are illegitimate persons because they accumulate power and disrupt the potential of a world without hierarchy. Occupy's rejection of representation in the form of both government and corporations as a form of collective identification was undercut by the requirement for consensus in the assemblies. In the "human microphone," individual differences were subsumed to a collective identity as everyone repeated whatever was said by the main speaker at the time. Through the use of memes as a type of branding and the collective identification of the assemblies and the human microphone, what began as a mockery of corporate identity turned into mimicry when the tribal identification of Occupy shifted from a means to an end. Occupy's collapse as a movement (in that form) began when they convinced themselves that the process of the encampments meant that the transformation they were striving for had arrived.

Both the Tea Party and Occupy are attempts to reclaim power from a nefarious enemy. In my analysis, I found the attribution of absolute agency to the enemy in both the Tea Party and Occupy recalled previous work I had done on the rhetoric of conspiracy

theories.[344] In my master's thesis I read Richard Hofstader's discussion of "the paranoid style in American politics" through Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualization of paranoia to explain how the belief that the enemy has unfettered agency serves to give conspiracy narratives their coherence and reinforces certainty.[345] In this paranoid rhetoric, the opposition to an enemy is what stabilizes the group's sense of self. In the idiom of Laclau's theory of populist reason, the people affirm their identity through the rhetorical creation of a border between themselves and their enemy. The discussion of these movements as attempt to discursively mark a tribal territory led to my final research question about the role of media technology in these movements.

RQ3: How does technology influence these movements from one virtual territory to another?

Because I understand populist movements as a response to a crisis of representation, my final question deals with how media technologies shape our political perceptions. As part of the background research for studying the Tea Party, I spent a lot of time immersing myself in conservative media, and my interest in the role media play in these movements follows from the straightforward observation that the interpretation of political reality one sees on Fox News is often incompatible with the information one would get from other sources. The development of partisan media environments can be

344 Matthew B. Morris, "TruthTexts: A Critical/Cultural Analysis of the 9/11 Truth Movement" (master's thesis, Arizona State University, 2008).

345 Hofstadter, Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics, and other Essays*, (New York: Knopf, 1965).

explained by the political economy of market segmentation and creating competing news products to appeal to different audiences, and the Marxist interpretation that grounds my own approach would see these media agencies as serving an ideological function in support of the interests of capitalism. From this basis of understanding our different media environments, I was interested in interrogating *how* these environments affect our perceptions.

My move to media ecology as an answer to my third question follows from my preliminary observations that the rhetoric of these movements frames the terrain of contestation as temporal. Tea Party rhetoric tends to be forensic (or juridical), oriented toward assigning guilt to the government for being unfaithful to their ideal of the past. Occupy promised activists the potential of pure deliberation that would create a future in which debts to the past would be erased, but in practice the assemblies collapsed this future into a perpetual present. According to Laclau, populist movements articulate their identities by forming a border between themselves and their enemies to create a territory that the people can claim sovereignty over. I wanted to temporalize Laclau's spatial model to help account for disputes between groups over representations of the past, present, and future. My interest in the role of media in shaping the rhetoric of the Tea party and Occupy led me to the work of Harold Ennis and "media ecologists," many of whom focus on how technology transforms perceptions of time and space.

The dominant media for the Tea Party follow a broadcast structure in which messages are sent from a central source. The broadcast paradigm reinforces the dogmatic image of thought, which Deleuze explains as a procedure in which the true is

distinguished from the false through its similarity to a model. Conservative media serve as a priesthood that both construct the model from which the "true" meaning of the Constitution is derived, and offer interpretations of reality distinguished by fidelity to that mythical model. The Tea Party myth is a past in which the authority of the Founding Fathers is treated with a reverence analogous to that of divinely-inspired scripture. In this virtual territory, the Constitution laid the foundation for the free market (rather than the government), which was the means for realizing freedom. The Tea Party see themselves as a chosen people who follow the example of Reagan in calling for a return to this ideal.

Conservative media maintain their audience by reinforcing these perceptions and vilifying alternatives that would raise doubt about the regime of infallibility through which the Tea Party activists trace themselves back through Reagan (and Nixon), Lincoln, the Founding Fathers, and from there to God. The authority vested in conservative media as legitimate heirs to the foundational principles of the United States gives them significant influence over the perception of problems as well as the proposed solutions. In other words: conservative media create the virtual worlds that motivate the Tea Party to change the actual one.

Occupy is united by a rejection of representation, in part because the dominant media systems in the United States are corporately-controlled.[346] As an alternative to the older broadcast media, Occupy activists turn to online sources to take control over the creation of meaning, and reproduce the logic of platforms like Twitter and Wikipedia as

346 "Independent Lens . DEMOCRACY ON DEADLINE . Who Owns the Media?" *PBS*, accessed April 20, 2017. http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/democracyondeadline/mediaownership.html.

Occupy becomes an operating system for activism. Using online services helps activists link their divergent experiences to a common interface, but the most potent interaction with the movement requires presence in the General Assemblies of the camps. In their quest to create their own meaning without mediation, Occupy embraces a logic of authenticity in which immediate human relationships are privileged in the direct democracy of the camps. The privileging of presence in the camps as authentic democracy presents a challenge when Occupy is faced with representing their demands to the outside world, and so the virtual territory Occupy is motivated to actualize is one in which every place is turned into an Occupy encampment.

As an undeniable echo of the crisis of capitalism that burst forth in 2008, the election of 2016 and the possibility that external actors interfered in the American people's selection of representatives has catalyzed a crisis of liberal democracy. The circulation of disinformation through both social and broadcast media requires that we reconsider the fundamental assumption of our constitutional system that the application of human reason to information can come to the best solutions. It is important to correct false information, but as we have seen contemporary media technologies can help spread lies that have a real effect on how people perceive their political environment and are motivated toward changing it. My theory of virtual movements takes these technologies into account as part of the environment in which virtual territories are actualized as a way of augmenting traditional approaches that treat media technologies as a simple conduit for representations that can be judged as true or false. My methodological innovation of the Populist Pentad gives us a technique for mapping the territories as these movements

create narratives that help their members make sense of the world. The rhetoric of these movements does not emerge in a vacuum, and so my approach focuses on the material contexts in which these discourses shape the identities of the virtual tribes as they attempt to claim the mantle of popular sovereignty.

LIMITATIONS

The first limitation of this study is methodological. Rhetorical analysis depends on texts, and so there is always a question of how texts are selected. An obvious criticism may be that if the core of my work is a critique of representation, how can I make a claim that the texts I have chosen represent the movements I am studying? As I explain in the case studies, my selection of texts is not based on a claim to represent the movement as a whole, but rather as an expression of themes and affective intensities that are repeated throughout their discourses. I chose my texts as expressions of each of the movements with consideration of the role of media technology in shaping those movements. In other words, I do not claim this study to be "objective" because I do not claim—or at least work to resist—epistemological privilege.

My primary criterion for text selection was simply taking notice of texts that were recurrently embraced by the movements themselves. For the Tea Party, as I immersed myself in conservative media themes emerged through the repetition of abstractions and generalizations such as the "free market" or "common sense" as the ideals to which we should be faithful. In other words, I chose my examples as a synecdoche in which major themes repeated throughout the movement were expressed. For Occupy, I tried to avoid

any claims at representation by focusing on the process, which again was repeated in each of the encampments but may have had different outcomes depending on who participated in each encampment. It was the unity of process that linked different groups together, but to provide unity to my presentation I focused on the encampment in New York because it was the major hub in the network of Occupy.

Other methods may have helped to answer some of the questions I addressed in this dissertation. For example, content analysis would help illustrate the repetition of these themes across texts, while surveys or interviews would have been useful to make more general claims about the beliefs of the activists themselves. My rhetorical approach offers a way of theorizing these movements that quantitative approaches could test, so those methods would serve as a supplement to this project not a replacement. One method that I believe has a lot of promise for the study of social movements is critical-rhetorical ethnography, which borrows from ethnographic methods such as participant observation (or "rhetorical field methods") as a way of informing rhetorical analysis.[347] In the early stages of this project when each movement was still holding demonstrations I attended several protests for each, but did so without following the procedures that would have been required to use my observations as more than background information.

The other limitations of this study are theoretical and could be categorized under the heading of "generalizability." First, I have tried to avoid making an argument from a standpoint of technological determinism. My theory is not based on the belief that these

347 For a good description of this method, see: Aaron Hess, "Critical-Rhetorical Ethnography: Rethinking the Place and Process of Rhetoric," *Communication Studies* 62, no. 2 (April 18, 2011): 127–52.

technologies cause the rhetoric I analyze. Instead, my claim is that our perceptions of reality are informed by the ways we receive information about it, and so different technologies may reinforce different interpretive tendencies. Second, my analysis is focused on the United States. My presumption is that these media technologies would have different impacts on the political systems of other countries, but aside from perhaps the United Kingdom or Norway, I do not know enough about these media or political systems to offer an informed analysis.

Finally, the claims I make in this dissertation are not meant to be absolute. People could identify with either the Tea Party or Occupy and question some aspects of the narratives I analyze. My main focus was on the patterns that resonated within these movements, and so those patterns might include different elements depending on the person. For example, in my analysis of the Tea Party I referenced the reproduction of the logic of Protestantism in the movement. My point was not to criticize Protestantism, or to imply that one must be a Protestant to adhere to the Tea Party narrative. More broadly my criticism was directed toward applying the same logic we use for religious faith to political matters. Despite their many problems, I have a great deal of respect for the framers of the Constitution and the political system they designed. But they weren't infallible, nor are those who claim to be delivering the faithful interpretation of their work. Nor am I. Hence, in keeping with my critique of representation, I offer my observations with the caveat that they are not meant to be read as final. Because these movements are more complicated than any ability to distill them to a few dozen pages, there is always more to learn.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH:

When I started this project one of the things that interested me was developing a theory of hegemony that incorporated insights from evolutionary theory. One of my inspirations for thinking about social movements from an evolutionary perspective (tribes, territories) is the book *The Social Conquest of Earth* in which Edward O. Wilson explains his theory that it is *group* selection rather than *kin* selection that drives evolution.[348] Theories of group selection offer an account of how biological diversity develops, in contrast to theories of kin selection that would create the expectation that adaptation is a matter of preserving similarity.[349] In political science, the consideration of evolution has been taken up in the argument that conservatism and liberalism both serve an evolutionary purpose as conservatives protect the group from outside threats while liberals promote diversity that may enhance the adaptation of the tribe.[350] The question I did not get to explore here, but may in future iterations of this project, is about the role of rhetoric in group selection. It seems the relationship between rhetoric and evolution is an underdeveloped theoretical terrain, and I wonder if this is because of concern that evolution is a deterministic theory and so leaves no room for agency. It may be worthwhile to challenge that assumption.

The other area of further study would be an extension of my analysis of the rhetorical construction of identity. Specifically, as I was writing I thought about previous work I had done

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348 Edward O. Wilson, *The Social Conquest of Earth* (New York: Liveright, 2012).

349 For an example of the theory of kin selection, see: Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene: 40th Anniversary Edition*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016).

350 See Joshua Greene, *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason, and the Gap Between Us and Them*, (Penguin Books, 2014). and Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*, (New York: Vintage, 2013).

on the rhetoric of conspiracy theories. The 2016 election and the issue of fake news has made this rhetoric of conspiracy especially timely, I believe, because it seems to me that part of it is a fetishizing of skepticism. Conspiracy theorists are driven by distrust of traditional authority, while purveyors of these theories seem to tell their audiences that they are special because they are not fooled like everyone else. My thought is that this seems to be an extreme manifestation of the privatizing impulse of neoliberalism as it makes everyone into information entrepreneurs.

Finally, as my introduction to this final chapter indicates, it may be worthwhile to further explore how the Tea Party (and Occupy) set the stage for Trump's triumph. After the election I took a hiatus from my typical media consumption. After the inauguration, I took up my media habit with a new obsession with the way the story of the FBI investigation into possible ties between the Trump campaign and Russian intelligence was told on conservative media and liberal media. So many of Trump's responses to the controversy resonate with Nixon's during Watergate, and I started to wonder if the dual spirits of Reagan and Nixon that I believe are at work within the Tea Party have become manifest in the election of Donald Trump. I think that a study of Trump may link to a study of conspiracy rhetoric as a way of exploring how paranoia is the other face of narcissism in the rhetorical construction of identity under neoliberalism, which finds its greatest expression in the promise that we can "make American great again" by "building a wall."

IMPLICATIONS:

The primary intervention of my dissertation is into the study of social movements. The implication of the theory of virtual movements is that to understand what motivates these groups to create social change, we should consider how the perception of the

problem and advocacy of a solution involves both material and discursive aspects. Thinking of social movements as tribes that are motivated by the desire to actualize their virtual territories allows us to avoid the extremes that these case studies illustrate in our typical conceptualization of the problem of representation, where rhetoric is either evaluated according to its fidelity to our own conception of reality, or a non-representational affective rhetoric is valorized as a more authentic expression. What my method of analyzing populist narratives offers is a way of critiquing the truth procedures through which the people are constituted and subsequently articulate their power. In other words, the theory of virtual movements helps us to understand how the question of social movements is not whether their rhetoric is true or false, because it shows how lies can, in fact, become real—and vice versa.

I have offered "virtual movements" as a way of thinking about social movements as groups, motivated by the perception of flaws in the world, who attempt to actualize their ideas of what the world should be. It is no revelation that conservatives are past-oriented: William F. Buckley himself defined conservatism as a movement that looks to the past for answers to our problems.[351] Similarly, the tendency for people on the left to be future-oriented should be clear enough from the label "Progressive." It also makes sense that the older cohort involved in the Tea Party would be past-oriented, while the younger people involved in Occupy would be mostly concerned with the future. What technology does is channel these tendencies toward the belief that these perceptions are

351 William F. Buckley, "Our Mission Statement." *National Review*. Accessed April 19, 2017. http://www.nationalreview.com/article/223549/our-mission-statement-william-f-buckley-jr.

universal. My goal was to compare the Tea Party and Occupy to better understand how technology informs the perception of "the people" at the core of populist rhetoric; as such, my argument has implications in the areas of media, political philosophy, and the rhetoric of social movements.

The U.S. media environment operates within the larger system of capitalism. In my analysis, I discussed how one of the differences between these media technologies was the mode of production for content. From a Marxist perspective, this distinction may help us to understand the ideological functions of these technologies. The broadcast media that conservatives tend to rely upon are controlled by corporations who have an interest in restoring faith in capitalism. The centralization of control over content in broadcast news media means that one of the best ways to develop an audience is to promote content that reinforces the ideology of a group.

The development of the Internet has made people less dependent on these centralized sources for information so that in the information economy control over the means of production has become less important than control over the means of consumption or distribution.[352] In other words, the means of creating content are not as limited as, say, the tools a factory would need to create commodities in 19th century London. But, if you want people to see the content you produce, social media provides the greatest dissemination. This is important because, despite the idea that the Internet allows for the distribution of power through the population, services like Facebook,

352 Jodi Dean calls this "communicative capitalism." See: Jodi Dean, *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri call this "immaterial labor." See: Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. *Empire*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

Twitter, and Google extract value in advertising revenue from user-created content. More recently, congress passed a law allowing service providers to sell browsing data to advertisers so that, absent precautions that may require more technical skills than average, all of our online traffic is now being commodified.[353]

The market does not provide a way of distinguishing facts from lies. The second implication of my study regarding media could be called a plea for expertise. One of the books I read to better understand online media while working on this project was *Trust Me, I'm Lying* by publicist and marketer Ryan Holiday.[354] As a marketing director for American Apparel, Holiday claims to have helped pioneer many of the techniques that are used to make something go viral on the Internet. He describes the problem with what we could today call "fake news" as a matter of market dynamics: blogs, specifically, rely on clicks for revenue so there is an incentive to produce as much content as quickly as possible without going through the standard process for vetting information you (ideally) would find in television or print publications. According to Holiday, the currency for online media is novelty rather than the credibility that print publications rely upon to keep subscribers, which means savvy markets can use techniques like anonymous tips to plant stories with bloggers whose standards are fairly low, which then justifies more established blogs to pick them up, and on up the chain until the need to "report the controversy" may help completely fabricated stories get attention in mainstream media.

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353 Taylor Hatmaker, "Congress Just Voted to Let Internet Providers Sell Your Browsing History," *TechCrunch*, accessed April 19, 2017. http://social.techcrunch.com/2017/03/28/house-vote-sj-34-isp-regulations-fcc/.

354 Ryan Holiday, *Trust Me, I'm Lying: Confessions of a Media Manipulator*, (New York: Portfolio, 2013).

We may have witnessed this market dynamic in the 2016 election. An analysis by Buzzfeed (which admittedly, is right at the line between journalistic and blogger standards) found that as the election drew nearer, fake news was shared more on Facebook than stories from established sources.[355] According to an investigation by Ryan Grim and Jason Cherkis of the Huffington Post (again, right at the line), proliferators of fake news may have specifically targeted Bernie Sanders supporters with stories such as those alleging that Hillary Clinton ran a pedophile ring in a pizza shop.[356] So another implication of my analysis of different media environments is the need for better media literacy education if we are to base our deliberation on reliable information, which leads to the political implications of my study.

Populist movements exist because true political representation of all the people is impossible. In the U.S. political system, the politics of representation are explicitly built into the choice of a republican rather than democratic form of government. The party system developed as a way of providing voters with rival claimants, with identification as the basis of selecting candidates (Does this person represent my beliefs?) rather than other possible criteria such as competence. Every election has winners or losers, and the conditions for a crisis of representation are inherent to the politics of representation itself because politicians who won because of their claim to represent a larger portion of the electorate are expected to govern as representatives of the whole, which is not possible.

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355 Craig Silverman, "This Analysis Shows How Viral Fake Election News Stories Outperformed Real News On Facebook," *BuzzFeed*, accessed April 20, 2017. https://www.buzzfeed.com/craigsilverman/viral-fake-election-news-outperformed-real-news-on-facebook.

356 Ryan Grim and Jason Cherkis, "Bernie Sanders' Campaign Faced A Fake News Tsunami. Where Did It Come From?" *Huffington Post*, March 11, 2017, sec. Politics, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/bernie-sanders-fake-news-russia_us_58c34d97e4b0ed71826cdb36.

The politics of representation are especially problematic in a country as diverse as the United States. Political scientists Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein argue that because our electoral system is based on a winner-take-all model rather than proportional representation, America's two-party system is built into the Constitution even if it is not explicitly mentioned. [357] Parliamentary systems can create coalition governments of multiple parties, whereas the U.S. Congress is divided into a majority and minority party. Unless we assume that there are only two types of people in the United States (there aren't), then the party system is doomed to fail to represent everyone.

If power in our system is supposed to derive from the people, distributing that power according to identity rather than difference is going to leave people out. Unlike corporations, Tea Partiers are people too and so, while we may not agree with their explanation for these feelings, dismissing the discontent of the Tea Party as illegitimate may justify their resentment toward the Left. That resentment is often expressed as a rejection of expertise, because the notion that some people know better than others seems incompatible with the ideal of equal participation in deliberation. In reality, however, the knowledge it takes to run a small business may not translate to the knowledge it takes to design a health care system, and being a neurosurgeon does not necessarily mean you should be president, to choose two examples completely at random. As our economy increasingly rewards people based on their ability to manipulate information, the Tea Party may provide its adherents with a way of affirming their identity by telling them that

[357] Thomas E Mann and Norman J Ornstein, 2013. *It's Even Worse Than It Looks*, (New York: Basic Books, 2013).

their knowledge is better than the experts.

Occupy did not share the Tea Party's resistance to expertise, as seen by the participation of philosophers and Nobel prize winning economists alike. The insistence on consensus as the basis for making decisions, however, undermines their claim to embody democracy by putting a limit on deliberation that discourages disagreement. Occupy's political impact may not be measured by their ability to translate their demands to an electoral politics of representation, but instead by the way they made visible many of the issues of economic inequality and police violence that came to dominate mainstream news in the years that followed. The election of Donald Trump may reinvigorate activists who participated in Occupy as they attempt to resist the policies advocated by his administration and Republican control of all major aspects of our government.

In this dissertation I have provided a framework for understanding social movements in a changing media environment. As our access to information accelerates, the question of representation will continue to be pertinent in the negotiation over the distribution of power as diverse groups struggle for hegemony. The link between media territories and the question of who counts as "the people" is one that will take serious consideration if we are to fulfill the promise of achieving a more perfect union. As we attempt to actualize our virtual movements, it is important for scholars of rhetoric to rethink liberal assumptions about whether truth can be found in identity or if this is just a way for us to assert our certainty against our dread of difference.

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